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COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. CCCCXXXIII.

YEAR AFTER YEAR.

IN ONE VOLUME.

YEAR AFTER YEAR

A TALE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "PAUL FERROLL."

Isabella. Alas! what poor ability's in me
To do him good?
Lucio. Assay the power you have.
Isabella. My power! alas! I doubt....
MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

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A PREFIX.

The opinions of the Public are like Fate. An Author may loudly declare them unjust, but he does not alter them one tittle. A Reviewer is essentially the Public; and to controvert his decision is the most futile wriggle of an uneasy Author.

But facts are different from opinions. They *are*, or *are not*. On that ground any one may challenge them; and, accordingly, I take the present opportunity to speak to certain censures passed on "Paul Ferroll," in the *Edinburgh Review* for April, 1857. The writer finds fault with the Book, because, says he, "The hero commits a cold-blooded crime," yet "is represented as the mildest, noblest, most humane and amiable of men." This is a question of facts. Is he so represented?

The reader has to answer Yes, or No. Those whose printed examination of the Work can be referred to, have pronounced Paul Ferroll the murderer — to be selfish, hard — a doer of good merely for his own amusement — a man in whom conscience is superseded by intellect. It is the Edinburgh Reviewer only who, in a sentence, not of examination, but of condemnation,

says that Paul Ferroll both commits a murder, and is "the most humane and amiable of men." Had the facts been true, the conclusion would have been admirable; the weak part is, the facts are not true.

I have it all my own way at this moment. The Reviewer must be silent, while I talk in my own new book. And I am right to talk; for "would not a man be annoyed to be falsely exhibited to the world; would he not publish the truth?" as says the biographer of Charles James Napier.

YEAR AFTER YEAR.

CHAPTER I.

In the earliest days that I remember, my brother and I were left orphans by the death of our father. I should have no recollection of those days if they had not been marked by so striking an event; and between them and future years there is a blank, as if nothing less important could have impressed my memory so early. I have no recollection of my mother; I have forgotten, if I ever knew one; and the sole ideas attached to the name of parent, come from the few words and few things which impressed my infant imagination when my father died. These are very detached and trivial; but such as they are, they went toward the forming of my character.

Thus, one day when my father's illness was known to be fatal, and the labour and watching consequent upon it were at the highest, my nurse, holding me in her arms, and without thinking of me, said confidentially to another servant — "But this may go on for weeks yet;" and the other, lifting her hands with an expression of impatience, cried, "Lord forbid!" No doubt I was accustomed at the time to hear the conventional expressions of the drawing-room; and though I do not remember that I learned to doubt their sincerity, I retain the feeling still, which the maids' words gave, how the things

spoken in a corner, and those which are said aloud in company, may differ very much from one another.

The other occurrence which I recollect, took place after his death, when the rites of the dead body having been performed, the household were permitted to behold it. I recollect the same nurse asking me if I would not go in and see "poor papa," and her voice directing me by its tone to say "Yes," as something pious and necessary — but some horror overcame me at the door, which was about to be opened with so much ceremony, and I clung to her neck, and refused to enter. I have never quite lost what seems now like an instinctive fear at the sight or near approach to the dead; probably it was turning away from the closed room which stamped the feeling.

My brother at this time was old enough to take a part in the scene, and partly to understand its mournful bearings. I have often heard of him since, walking as a child, as chief mourner behind our father's coffin. When he returned home, he came to look for me, and took me away from the persons who were around, that they might not hear what he said, nor ought they to have heard; but some one had the bad taste and feeling to steal in and listen to the young heir, and then repeat his words.

"Katherine," he said, "I am to be your father and mother, not brother only; you are to obey me, Katherine, but I will never tell you to do anything but what is proper, and for your good; and you are never to go away from me, for I am older and stronger than you are, and there is nobody but me now to take care of you." This was often repeated, and my brother, who had spoken, thinking himself alone, could not endure to hear it.

They applauded him, and at the same time laughed at the authority he assumed, and the counsel he gave; and the feeling of having exposed himself to ridicule in any shape, called the blood into his face and the tears into his eyes whenever the anecdote was alluded to. It was fortunate for me that their observations did me no further harm with him; he continued to consider and treat me in the manner he had promised, but there are no more expressions of his good will to be recorded.

I stood in particular need of kindness from the very cause which was likely to prevent me from receiving it, namely, the misfortune of my birth; for Gray's mother was not my mother. His was the honoured wife of our father, who died when he was born; mine had no name or place, and it was through my father's pity that I was taken from her never to know her, and to be brought up in his house, and with his name. While I was a young child I did not know that I was without claim to these privileges. I was as careless and happy as those born to honour; and neither my little companions nor I knew that one was at all more worthy of the world's friendship than the other; but by degrees I came to feel there was something wrong in my fate; chance words of pity, before I knew there was anything in me to be pitied, excited my attention; casual signs of neglect when compared with other children; the tone of equality insensibly assumed upon this or that occasion by persons who seemed beneath me, gave me hard lessons respecting my own station, and before any one had said so much to me, before I could understand the meaning of the thing I was conscious of, I was perfectly aware that I was the child of a mother who must not be named. This disadvantage was not compensated by any shining gifts of

nature; she had cast me from her hand with no "silent advocate" in my face, no brilliant talent to win involuntary kindness; whatever treasures she had given me, had to seek for approbation from beneath the weight of a disgraceful situation, and an unamiable exterior.

My brother in the meantime had all the advantages of nature and of fortune which were denied to me. He was of honourable station, beautiful, and rich; and his feelings towards the world were the very opposite to those which I acquired. Confident of welcome, accustomed to ornament society, and to be wished for when he was to come, missed when he stayed away, he took frankly to the world, and if he sometimes treated it as an indulged child will treat those who spoil him, yet, on the whole, he enjoyed life in all its shapes and times, and found and gave pleasure go where he would. But with all this he never forgot me — he did not recollect me out of duty, but out of love; and I was as conscious of the source of *his* kindness, as I was suspicious and grieved at the reluctant attention of others. He was the only person in the world with whom I felt my confidence expand; the only one to whom I thought myself necessary. He employed me in various services, and forgot, if nobody else did, how little ornamental I was to life. I loved him so well, that heart could not love better; and the longer I lived, and the more knowledge I gained, the more I enjoyed and clung to the pleasure which he diffused over my solitary existence.

I had always the will, not always the power to do him service. When he was a boy of thirteen, and I was a little more than nine, it chanced that a school friend induced him to take an expedition, as both were on their way home for the holidays, which was to have cost, by

the most accurate calculation, exactly five pounds; the amount which my brother had in his pocket. The expenses exceeded the original sum, however, four times, and, for the moment, the money was advanced by his companion, who had been intrusted with about that sum to carry home from an old cousin, who laid up her savings in his father's hands. It was to be repaid, however, as soon as they arrived at Buckwell, our old manor-house, by means of Gray's guardian, upon whose liberality my brother confidently depended while at a distance; but it so happened that he was in high anger at the delay which the expedition had caused in returning home, and his admonitions being rather more peremptory than Gray liked, his answers were stormy, and all idea of asking a favour became out of the question. What was to be done, however, without his assistance, was a sufficient perplexity. The friend was very urgent, and dwelt upon the favour he had conferred by the loan, till Gray would have given his right hand to have freed himself from the obligation. Pride made him wild to discharge it; but pride sealed his lips from asking the means from his guardian. He came to me, whenever we could be alone, to pour out all his trouble. I was almost more wretched than himself; I could not sleep for the heartbeating which the thought of his embarrassment excited, and the vain longing for means to relieve him from it. The sum seemed very great to me; for, upon calculation of my revenues, I found that my whole allowance saved for eight hundred weeks would not more than amount to it, and I had nothing so much my own that I could part with it for him. I gave him my whole treasure, consisting of the current week's sixpence, five silver pence, and a half-crown, presented to me last

Christmas by my uncle; but the very day this beginning was made, Gray's friend wrote a letter, describing the obligation he had conferred as so great, and the difficulty so pressing, that it drove Gray frantic, and the sum must be had by some means or other.

He took me into his confidence, and told me that he had heard of a Mr. Corn, in a neighbouring town, who was in the habit of advancing money; "and," said Gray, "though I have heard enough of the difficulties one runs into by borrowing; yet, in this case, there's plainly no danger, for, in the first place, he is not a Jew, and in the next, I shall take care to have no more to do with him than what I want at present, and twenty pounds will ruin no man."

I was much too young to see any more danger than Gray did, or to be otherwise than convinced by his opinion; and the only thing to be thought of was, how to put the scheme into execution. I remember, perfectly well, that his guardian was on the point of discovering the affair, and whatever grief it would have cost us both at the time, it would have been very well if he had followed out the secret which he must or ought to have suspected. The danger of discovery we ran was this: — In order to prevent Gray from practising any concealment, his guardian had absolutely forbidden the use of locks and keys; and was in the habit of looking through desks and drawers at uncertain intervals. When a secret really existed, therefore, it was necessary to invent some still more secure retreat; and his friend Roberts' last letter had been carried about by myself the whole of the day and the night since it came. It went in my handkerchief to bed, and in the day time, lay inside my frock, with the danger that the corners and the edge

should make themselves conspicuous under the cambric, and, accordingly, what was to be apprehended took place. As we sate at breakfast, one end of it, as I held out my hand for the milk, actually came out of the opening of my frock, and Mr. Mainwaring, who was standing by, pointed at it, nay, had his finger on it, saying, "What's that?" I think I was too frightened to show fear, and the fright invented a story for me on the instant. I thrust my hand under his upon the letter, and said the seam of my frock was rough, and I had put a folded paper between it and my skin. "Poor child!" said he, desisting. He could hardly have been deceived; he, probably, thought it not worth while to explore a mystery of mine. He took no further notice, at all events; and to my unformed conscience, it seemed that, whatever was the wrong of an untruth, yet, that it was quite necessary to tell one, since the secret could not have been kept without. This was mean, but I was a frightened girl, ill brought up.

If this danger had proved real, the next step would have been prevented; as it was, we set about the means of taking it. There was no great difficulty in this, for Gray had the command of a pony and a pony carriage, and in the latter, he had made it a habit lately to take me on various expeditions. It was easy enough, therefore, to visit the little town in question. He had warned Mr. Corn that he was coming, and had been relieved from all anxiety concerning his reception by an answer, dexterously conveyed through a trusty messenger, who contrived, without any ostentation, to deliver it very privately. The days and hours appointed were numerous, lest any one should prove inconvenient, and everything was smoothed for his reception so far as it lay in the

power of Mr. Corn. One fine summer's morning, accordingly, we set off; and highly pleased we were, like children, to find ourselves on the road to Norden, and in pursuit of such an important affair. Gray talked of the convenience of having money before the legal time. It was his own, he said, only the law kept it from him; and I listened, and was as perfectly convinced by his arguments, as he had been by the older lips which had used them to *him*.

Mr. Corn came in as soon as we had reached his drawing-room, and welcomed us to his house with every expression of pleasure at making our acquaintance. The business which we came upon seemed forgotten in the more pressing calls of friendship. He propitiated us with cake and wine, for we were quite young enough for that, and when we were supplied, he began to inquire, in the most accommodating voice, what he could do for the young baronet. I can still see, as plainly as if it were before me now, Gray's noble young face and figure, with his open collar and his hat in his hand, standing beside the chimney-place, and looking Mr. Corn full in the face while he declared his errand.

"The sum that I want is no great deal," said Gray. "It is for a particular purpose, but it does not matter what that is."

"Not at all," said Mr. Corn.

"And I must have it immediately."

"Of course," said Mr. Corn, "though you know it is not always easy, without considerable sacrifice, to command at a moment any sum of importance. We men of business are obliged to be doing something with our money; and cannot realize at a moment's notice without loss — nevertheless it is always to be had, always."

"Oh," said Gray, "this is no sum of importance. It is only twenty pounds."

"Oh! indeed," said Mr. Corn.

"You can let me have it?" asked Gray. "I mean upon proper terms."

"You may rely upon it," said Mr. Corn, "you have put yourself into very safe hands, and may depend upon being treated with upon the very properest of terms."

"Oh, I did not mean that," said Gray, colouring, in his haste to prevent Mr. Corn from supposing that he could have the least suspicion of his integrity. "I meant that I was ready to give the security which they tell me gentlemen do give on these occasions."

"Nay, nay, don't let's talk of that," said Mr. Corn, "a mere trifle; a thing I'm too happy to accommodate you with. You can put your name, if you please, to the loan, but that's all I should think of requiring."

"Very well," said Gray; "I'll do whatever you like."

"Your word is as good as your bond, you know," said Mr. Corn, with a tone of hilarity.

"To be sure," said Gray; "but you are to understand that I shall not be able to repay you perhaps till I come of age, which will be eleven years, as I don't come of age till twenty-four, and I was thirteen, only, last month."

"Thirteen! bless me, you don't say so," said Mr. Corn; "I should have guessed you sixteen, only I remember, Sir Gray, I remember so well the day when it was announced there was an heir to Buckwell. Your poor father, I recollect his calling at our door, not a week after." Gray had nothing particular to answer.

"And this pretty lady," said Mr. Corn, turning to me, "how old are we?"

I never remembered being called pretty before, and I thought Mr. Corn very civil. I told him, with some emphasis on the fraction, that "I was nine and *a-half*."

"Ha, ha!" said Mr. Corn, as if this was exemplary conduct on my part, "then we are not so far from our brother — none but you two, I think, Sir Gray, to be heirs to all that fine property?"

"None but us," said Gray.

"Exactly, exactly, as you were saying" (and all the time Mr. Corn was writing on a sheet of paper something which Gray was to sign); "*you* first, and then the lady. Sir George, I think, was able to dispose of his estate, was not he? and nobody can blame him if he *did* choose his own daughter."

Gray answered nothing; and I, young as I was, felt the blood mount in my cheeks. "Is it not so?" said Mr. Corn, applying the blotting paper to his work, and selecting a good pen.

Gray asked, "What is so?" and took the pen, but before he set it on the paper, cast his eye over the writing he was to sign.

"Yes, just read it first," said Mr. Corn, stooping over him, and running his finger along the lines, while he read aloud, very rapidly, the contents of the paper: —

"In consideration of the sum of twenty pounds advanced to me by John Corn, &c., I, Gray Buckwell, Bart., promise to pay that sum, and other sums hereto and hereafter joined, with interest upon them, at the rate of ten per cent., upon attaining my majority."

"This, you see," said Mr. Corn, commenting after he

had read, "is to cover any difficulty there might be in case of my death, before it becomes quite convenient to you to repay this sum; because, should I die, as we all may, nobody would understand what the transaction was — for I keep all these things secret — there is no use in talking about them."

"No, that's true," said Gray.

"On the other hand," said Mr. Corn, "should anything so unfortunate occur as your death..... but there's no chance of that....."

"I can't tell that," said Gray; "suppose I were to die, what then?"

"Oh, I take my chance that you won't," said Mr. Corn, cheerily. "If you *should* — I say, in case you *should*, this paper's good for nothing: but I run the risk of that. In the mere possibility, I'm obliged, for form's sake, for the sake of those that come after me, to make the interest *rather* high, just to set against the risk — but, to accommodate you, I'll run the risk with pleasure."

"I don't like that," said Gray, very seriously; "is here no way of warranting you against it?"

"Oh, don't think of it," said Mr. Corn; "though, if it gives you any uneasiness, you shall double the security. If you and this young lady please, she shall put her name along with yours; and it would be only fair, if she ever came by such a windfall as your estate, that she should discharge these little debts."

"Do you mean if Gray died?" said I, all a child's passion rushing into my face.

"Nay, nay," said Mr. Corn, "my dear young lady, I'm only speaking of what might be, and, indeed, what is, without the smallest injury done to Sir Gray, for, as

his heiress, you can be so useful to him, you can accommodate him and everybody else so much, that I'm sure you must be pleased at it — that's all I meant."

The idea of being useful to Gray, of accommodating people, was so new and flattering that I looked at Mr. Corn, and received his respectful address with delight. I would have done anything for such pleasure; but when he offered me the pen Gray interposed. "No, no," said he, "you must not do that. I don't know whether or not Katherine *can* do it; but, at all events, she *shall* not, for me; and if there's no other way to have the money, why I'm afraid I must go without it."

"Oh, nothing easier, nothing so easy, nothing so unnecessary," cried Mr. Corn, very hurriedly. "I merely suggested the thing. I was not sure what her situation might be — and if it ....."

"Never mind it," said Gray, peremptorily; "can you let me have the money or not?"

"It is your own, my dear sir; on your own terms and any future sum you may find it convenient to require. I've provided for it, as you will observe, by the terms of our little agreement. You have only to send to me."

"Well, if you are satisfied," said Gray, "let me sign, and I am very much obliged to you."

"Oh, I'm always most happy to accommodate my friends," said Mr. Corn, resuming his more deliberate tone. He set a chair for Gray, dipped the pen in ink, and grave it to him. Gray sat down, as he used to do at school, and, with some pains about the shape of the letters, subscribed his name — Gray Buckwell.

CHAPTER II.

GRAY and I had an uncle, the only relation left to us. Gray's mother was an only child, and our father had but this brother. He was only a year younger than my father, and thus was so near being the eldest son, that he could not help feeling it hard that he should have been the younger. But this compassion for himself was only a part of that great compassion which he felt for every breathing thing; and which moved him to commiserate all that was not so happy as some other thing, even though it stood to reason that if one had gained the other must have lost.

Not long after our memorable expedition to Norden, this uncle came to Buckwell to see Gray and me. We both of us looked forward to the visit with some anxiety, as the occasion on which to resolve the questions which Mr. Corn's suggestion about the estate had raised in our minds. We had talked over it without coming to a conclusion, but the expression used on the occasion with regard to my importance had very much haunted us. I was wonderfully pleased with the idea, and when we were busy arranging our childish plans, we often came to a point, where I said, "And you know, Gray, my name can help you in these things, Mr. Corn said."

Gray was equally interested, but we were puzzled when we came to realize our notions; and we determined to apply to our uncle the first time we saw him.

He had his own reasons for the visit, independently of the genuine pleasure which he took in seeing us; but these were not immediately manifested, at least to us.

He had a long conversation with Gray's guardian, who came over to Buckwell that morning by appointment, to examine the steward's accounts after the rent-day, but Gray and I were not admitted to these mysteries, only when they came out of the library, and were taking leave of each other at the hall door, we heard from Mr. Mainwaring, the guardian, a few such words as "Impossible," "out of my power. When your nephew becomes his own master, it will be another thing" — and from our uncle this final expression; "I asked it, because in your place I would have done it;" and so they parted, Mr. Mainwaring to go home, Mr. Buckwell remaining with us.

The disappointment which it seemed had taken place in his one object, did not put my uncle out of conceit with the other, which was the satisfaction to be derived from visiting his native place, and talking to us.

"I'm always glad to find myself here," said he, as we sate together after dinner, he and Gray and I, before a large open window looking on the garden and the woods. "It is a noble place, Gray, and you are very happy. I'm very glad you are so happy as to possess it." Then my uncle sighed deeply, and went on. "It seems but a year or two ago, when your poor father and I were boys here together, and both as near of an equality as could be; except, perhaps, that our father gave me a little the advantage of the two, 'For,' said he, 'the eldest's time will come soon enough.'"

"Well, uncle, you could not both be eldest, you know," said Gray.

"No, my dear lad, and I'm sure I *would* not if your father must have been youngest, a fine noble creature as he always was; so superior to me in every respect."

"I remember him," said Gray, thoughtfully.

"Remember him? yes, I should think so; it does not seem to me possible to forget him here. He got the estate young, you know, and I well recollect when the time came for him to take possession, and for me to go away. That was very hard."

"But why did you not stay, as Katherine stays with me?" said Gray.

"Oh! Katherine must go some day," said my uncle, taking my hand compassionately.

"No, that she never shall," cried Gray, "while I'm alive at least, and if I should die, uncle, it would be her own, would not it?"

On this I began to cry, as children always do when they hear any one talk about dying, for, as far as I recollect, they feel as if to mention it were to bring it to pass.

"She's crying, a foolish child," said Gray, lifting up my face from his shoulder where, not to show my tears, I had hidden it when he spoke; "just as if I meant to die," said he, rubbing my hand between his, and patting it.

"Good girl," said my uncle, "you would not have Gray die if you might have twice even Buckwell, would you?"

Children do not recover their voices in a moment, so I said nothing, but I wondered my uncle could have the heart to ask such a question. "But," said he, after a moment's pause, "you know, children, that if you, Gray, were not in the way, it is I should have the place. It was entailed on the heirs male, which Katherine could not be at any rate, because she is a girl, poor thing, not to mention any other accident; and, therefore, though I

was younger than my brother, I should have come next after him, but for you."

"I did not know it," said Gray.

"It is very odd they should not tell you things of that sort," said my uncle, a little pettishly; "not that my brother was in the wrong, in the least, when he had an heir; but only, you see, so it is."

"But if I'm in your way, *you* are in Katherine's," said Gray, "so it comes round."

"Yes, as it happens; though no doubt had my brother lived till you were of age, you and he would have joined to cut off the entail, and destroyed my poor chance."

Gray laughed: "Not so very poor a one neither, uncle," said he, "there's no knowing what may become of me yet."

"God forbid, my dear nephew!" cried Mr. Buckwell. "It is a thing just as impossible as to bring back the days before I was a born creature. What, I, an old man, within a year of seventy, compare myself with a young strong creature like you, Gray? I never dreamed of it."

"And after you, uncle," said Gray, "who is heir male then?"

"Why then the females come in," said Mr. Buckwell; "because there are no more then of our name in the world. My own poor girl would be my heir if she had lived. Ah me! my poor darling child; to think what a hard destiny there is for some people, and what a fine one for others:

"'How happy some o'er other some can be,'

as poor Shakespeare says — no doubt he knew what trouble was. My brother was a prosperous man up to

his last week in life, when he fell sick of his first sickness, and died; and behind him he leaves a noble creature like you, Gray, to carry on his name and his estate; while I bear my child's head to the grave myself, and have none left to inherit from me except her two poor little girls, and one so weakly, so likely to die."

"Oh! I hope not," said Gray; "and, after all, it seems they are better off than most people, for they are reckoned as good as boys, though poor Katherine is not."

"What good can that ever do them," said Mr. Buckwell, "except to vex them with vain hopes, poor dears? Katherine, to be sure, could not expect anything of the sort; but even she is better off than my own girl's girls. Your father left her two thousand pounds, and it will be four by the time she is of age, while they, with all their rights, will have nothing at all on coming of age, if I live so long.....well, it is hard!"

Gray laughed again. "I ought to get out of the way, should not I, uncle?" said he.

"You, Gray! How you do vex me, child, when you talk in that way. There might be a little morsel of light, surely, for me, and not take as much as would burn a candle from you, my boy."

"I hope so, I'm sure," said Gray.

"Yes, I know you do; and if it were only you, there would be no difficulty. But, to tell you the truth, though I don't know why I should....."

"Oh, yes, tell us," cried we both together.

"Oh, it is nothing entertaining, but I came to speak to your guardian about it."

"Well, tell us; tell us," said we both again.

"Nay, it's not worth while; but, if you set your minds on it..... Well, you must know that my son-in-law says, if I could raise at this moment only five hundred pounds, he could complete an investment, which he says he has an opportunity of making for his two dear girls, and which, for my own child's children, it is not very strange that I should be helped to, out of the estate; but your guardian says that I have already had the younger brother's portion; that's true — but it was not my fault that I was not the eldest."

"And you would have given *me* some money if you *had* been eldest, I'm sure," said Gray.

"I'm sure I should," answered my uncle.

"I think I can get it," said Gray, musing.

"No, I think you can't; your guardian is quite peremptory."

"But it is just, and, therefore, I think I can, and will," and as he said this, I very well knew where Gray meant to apply.

My uncle had no such knowledge, and only shook his head. The subject was dropped, and not discussed again during the remainder of Mr. Buckwell's stay. But Gray's second visit to Mr. Corn was to obtain, and he succeeded in doing so, the means of supplying the desired sum, very carefully concealing from my uncle the source whence he had drawn it. From what he said, I believe he thought Gray had persuaded his guardian to advance it.

CHAPTER III.

THINGS went on in this way for some time further. Gray having once found out the possibility of possessing money, did not abstain so scrupulously as his first notion of the thing promised, from using it. There was always some perfect reason which justified each particular application, and he went seldom enough to make him feel that he was self-denying and moderate when he did go. Yet, though the sums altogether were not large, the future payment of them made him reflect upon ways and means, and he was a little staggered at learning that the nature of an entail was to prevent the possibility of parting with any paternal acres, and that the income of his estates was the sole means he had to look to. Now, the income, though considerable, was not, as he could very well understand, more than sufficient for the style of living authorized by the place, and by his own growing habits. This made him pause, till his guardian one day boasted to him of the large accumulation which, through his excellent management, Gray would find in his possession when he came of age, and then he was at ease again.

"I shall be quite satisfied with the income, Katherine," said he, "and I don't want to make the purchases they talk of; so, I shall have plenty of money to pay Mr. Corn over and over, and I need not be afraid any longer."

I was growing older now, and was rather a better counsellor than at our first visit to Norden; but I saw the danger only because I was a looker-on; if I had been a principal in it, I should have done as Gray did.

Gray was now twenty, and there remained four years before he would be of age, according to the will of our father. His guardian took interest in nothing about him and his estate, except accumulating a certain sum before his majority; and with this object he restricted all the expenses of the place as much as he possibly could. Still, the absolutely necessary outlay was so great that his savings were less than he had intended, and he began to contemplate the end of his regency with his project defeated, unless he could further reduce the outlay and increase the savings. Now, there were at Buckwell many old customs observed, which are not, perhaps, wise or useful, but which grow up about old houses; and these, by my father's will, were retained, until Gray should be old enough to decide on their continuance or not. There were periodical distributions of money to the great content and discontent of the poor. There were clothes and food wasted, and partly misapplied, though, indeed, I don't believe they did much harm; but these and other practices, Mr. Mainwaring thought, might be safely retrenched, and the consequent saving added to his accumulations. He laid all this before Gray, with excellent reasoning to back it, and the report got abroad that reforms were going to take place. Of course there was violent opposition.

"You must not let them turn us out, sir," said Rooke, a superannuated game-keeper, "for it's your own land and house, though you have been put back of being twenty-one longer than other people. And, as to leaving my cottage, it is you that can be between that and me; and I have said all along, I'll trust Sir Gray to do as his forefathers have done."

"Indeed you may," said Gray, thoughtfully, "but

if such a thing were to be, my guardian tells me that he proposed you should go to live with your daughter, and that he thought you would be all the more comfortable."

"Lord love you! Sir Gray, what should I do with my daughter? She lives inside the town, with her husband and all the grandchildren, and you might just as well, nay, a good deal better, set me in the four walls of your father's vault, lying at his feet like the old falconer on the monument."

"No, no, Rooke," said Gray, "we have not done with you yet; we can't spare you for the churchyard these many years."

"It will be a short path to it, though," said Rooke, "if you do bid me leave my house. I'll not go further than the churchyard. I'll turn out of the path and lie down there."

"But you shan't go," said Gray, "if you take it in that way. I have a right to have my own way in these things, and I will see that you are not injured, Rooke."

"And poor Miss Katherine, too," said the old man, pursuing his advantage, "she's to go away too I learn — Buckwell to be shut up; the son a wandering and the daughter a stranger. Oh, Sir Gray, think better of that."

"I have — I do!" cried Gray, impatiently; "I'm going to do nothing unbecoming; don't be afraid."

"No, no, I'm not," said the old man, correcting the tone he had taken, when he saw that he had gone a little too far. "If I mistrusted you whom should I have to trust; I and all the helpless, useless souls that have got to the windward of your house; you'll be our shelter,

Sir Gray." So saying, he moved off, slouching a little in his gait, but looking still, in his velvet coat, and his old domestic bearing, like a fixed charge on a great house.

These and similar appeals wrought their full effect on the mind of my brother, and the end of it was, that he absolutely refused to allow that any changes should be made in the domestic arrangements. Mr. Mainwaring was very stiff and obstinate also, and there would have been a quarrel had it not occurred to Gray to propose that the allowance for the expenses of Buckwell should be put into his hands, to do the best he could by it, and that as he had now left college, the sums allotted to him there, should be merged with the other, which he should spend as he pleased, and the rest be treated as it pleased the guardian. There were temptations on both sides to make this acceptable; and though it was nearly obvious that the task would be a heavy one for the young possessor, the old guardian saw in it too agreeable a prospect to resist long; and, to the joy of us both, he put Gray into decided possession at the end of the year, and we sat down together joint independent housekeepers at Buckwell.

It was Gray's great desire, upon undertaking the responsibilities of housekeeping, to justify the confidence he had expressed in his own powers, and therefore he entered eagerly into details for which he had otherwise no inclination. He and I consulted every book upon domestic economy which we could hear of, and drew up a list of household expenses upon their authority, which left us, on paper, a magnificent surplus upon our income. We found that a cow would yield weekly ten pounds of butter, if well managed. "We will have four, and they

shall all be well managed," said Gray. Then they were to live in the deer park, where they would eat nothing but what the deer did not like; so we should keep the deer for nothing — "except just hay and beans in the winter," said Gray, "but we can eat the venison instead of other meat; and then a haunch of venison is always a good dinner if anybody comes, without anything else; so that, in fact, we shall save by the deer."

To the extreme discontent of the housekeeper I, with my own hand, set down the order for the butcher, upon a scale calculated by the "Housewife's Companion," and the consequence was, that in the middle of the week she came to ask, "What I pleased to have for dinner, as there was nothing in the larder?" and we were obliged to send off man and horse for a fresh supply.

"That's only an accident," said Gray, when we came to see that the bill was just twice as much as we had proposed; "another week, when we begin straightforward, it will go right."

However, the next week it was just the same, and we called the housekeeper to counsel.

"Why, sir, I'm sure I lose nothing, and let nothing waste whatever, that comes through my hands. It's always my principle, sir, and so everybody will tell you that ever knew me."

"Well, Mrs. Jolly, I'm not going to ask every-body. I only ask you, what's the reason we spend so much?"

"Why, sir, was not it only yesterday, when I had got the cold meat out for the men's supper, that Mr. Simcox and Mr. Ruffin both were waiting in the house-keeper's room to speak to you when you came in; you

would not, certainly, sir, have me let them sit and eat nothing."

"Oh, no, of course," said Gray, "they are tenants."

"Well, sir, then Miss Katherine bade me send soup to the Suttons; and the Castray family came to ask for a little meat; poor creatures, I don't like to turn them away."

"No, no, certainly; they are poor people," said Gray.

"And when Dr. Monkton came unexpectedly, sir, I was obliged to send for a little fillet of veal, because he's so particular, and he will have one white meat."

"Yes, yes; it's all very well for Dr. Monkton," answered Gray, "because *he* is an old friend."

"So you see it's only your wish, sir, and there's nothing the least extravagant on my part. On the contrary, I'm sure I get ill-will very often for taking your part, sir, against the servants. But you will find it out yourself when you see other housekeepers."

With this she put her apron to her eye and went out of the room; we laughed, and did not give in ostensibly; but, by degrees, she worked her will, and we came to — "Well, after all, I suppose Jolly must manage it."

Other things ran much the same course, and, upon sending the banking-book one sad day to be settled, and breaking the green seal and tearing the whity-brown thick paper in which it was wrapped, we found that the balance against us was £ 150. Here was a dead pause in our proceedings; I was amazed at the greatness of the sum; and quarter day weeks off yet. Gray thought slightly of the amount, but very much of the discredit; and the last possible alternative in his mind was to go

to Mr. Mainwaring and confess that the sneers of that ungracious gentleman had a solid foundation. On the contrary, he went to Mr. Corn, and got as much money as he wished and more, but when he came back, he told me that he had been making resolutions, and no time was to be lost in putting them in practice. What these were he proceeded to declare to me over the fire where we sat after dinner.

He said that upon due consideration, it had appeared to him that people, for whom he did not care, benefitted by his fortune more than they had any right to do. He thought that what Izaac Walton said was very true, "that the rich man's park was for him who looked at it, his house for the guests who had no trouble or expense and enjoyed it."

"Why, now, for instance, Katherine," said he "don't you, and don't I, sleep in two of the smallest rooms in the house, that the others may be the *company* rooms; and the garden and the deer-park, why, you know, if ever a pine or a buck is finer than the rest, they say, 'Oh, don't eat it to-day, sir, because there's only you and Miss Katherine.' Now, I'll not treat the world; I'll treat you and myself, and then we shall see if we have not plenty of money."

The practical part of this discourse was, that he meant to renounce every article of expense, which, upon calculation, he found was spent to make other people possess his fortune instead of himself. He knew it was not a usual mode of proceeding; but he intended never to accept as a reason for doing anything, "Oh, but everybody does so; oh, but what will the neighbours say?" I cried out with admiration that he was quite right; for, being still younger than he, these well-ordered words, in

the first place, sounded to me perfectly reasonable; and in the next, whatever Gray did I thought well done; therefore, he got no good counsel from me, and, without opposition, went on to lay down his plans.

I remember the evening perfectly. It was a rainy, dark night without, and the curtains were drawn close about the windows; the fire on the hearth-stone was made of wood, and close beside it we sate; the dessert neglected on the further table, and our little table drawn between us, with a long sheet of paper, and Gray's pencil, to make out his scheme of renunciation of the world. There we were alone, and together, as much as it was possible for two human creatures to be. None of the past generation was left to call us to account to *them;* none of the present possessed the least natural authority over us. Gray might do what he liked; the crude, strange fancies which haunt everybody's youth, were as able as they were willing, in this case, to change themselves into actions.

"So what can we give up which is absolutely useless for us two," said Gray, after he had made a list of everything of which we were at present in possession. "First comes Mrs. Jolly, at forty pounds a-year; what good does she do, except stew gooseberries into jam, and keep the jam in her cupboards till it is mouldy?"

"None at all, that I know of, except that she bought a large gold brooch the other day, because she said the housekeeper at Buckwell should have one bigger than Mr. Pierson's housekeeper."

"Cut her off, cut her off," said Gray, striking her name from the list; "I can't afford to keep gold brooches. Then, next to Mrs. Jolly," said he, going on, "is the butcher; why should a dinner consist of several more

dishes than anybody eats? and why, again, should it always be necessary to say to one's friends, 'Come and *dine* with me?' Would not it be more reasonable to say, 'Come and talk with me; and if you are hungry, or the time comes for eating while we are talking, you shall have a piece of meat and a piece of bread, and then we we will talk again.'"

"I am sure *I* should think so," I answered.

"So be it, then," said Gray, crossing out great columns of housekeeping; "we will try our friends and ourselves by that test. Whom we have not courage to invite on those terms, we will account not worth inviting; and if any are disgusted at them upon trial, we will not think it worth while to regret them."

"Then the stable, Gray," said I; "you should not keep your horses in such a condition that they must be worked before they are fit to ride; why not have them fit to ride at first?"

Gray hesitated a little at this, and said it was exercise, not work, they wanted; but for consistency's sake was forced to agree.

"Then," said he, attacking a less interesting part of the establishment, "why, again, are we to keep the grass mown for two miles along the walks, when we can both wear thick shoes, and walk through it with just as good a view of the woods and river as if the sward were shaven brown."

"But, if you don't do that, you will want fewer labourers, and the poor people will be without employment."

"Oh, no, by no means; I shall have more power to give them something useful to do. I will increase the number even; nobody who is willing to work shall be

idle for me; nobody who is idle shall be supported by me."

"What! old Rooke, for instance?"

"Ah! indeed, old Rooke; but you know that's quite another thing. He has always been accustomed to idleness, and shall enjoy it even if he double the allowance."

"And the sick people with their broths and porridges?"

"Oh, double the broths and porridges, too, if you like, and the flannel, and the port wine, and all that. It is only things which do nobody any good that I shall cut off."

Accordingly, he proceeded to put his establishment upon such a footing as he thought exclusive of everything but utility. He resolved to dare the world, wear a shooting-jacket, ride a rough horse, and give neither soup nor fish for dinner; and not only absolutely fixed this plan, but proceeded to act upon it.

It took some little time to effect these changes, but at last we found ourselves reduced to two servants, to two horses, shut by our own will from society, and beginning such lives as brother and sister may have led in the fifteenth century, when there happened to be only sulky, not bloody, feuds between them and the neighbouring barons. We never met any one in the sphere of our own rank; all whom we saw beside were inferiors, finding their social pleasures among each other, and only communicating with us in the way of services, or of casual and passing intercourse. All we had to say for which we wanted sympathy, all we wanted somebody to understand, we must say to each other. Gray would come in search of me to laugh at his conceits, read his books, feel interest in

his plans. I must look to Gray whatever I wanted, or liked, or did not comprehend, or fancied. No doubt it was very bad for him to live thus away from his natural companions; but for me it was great gain, and I never was so happy either before that time or since. We were always walking and talking together.

It was fine summer weather; the finest weather in the world, and we were out in it all day; we visited the cottagers, and I am afraid sometimes thought ourselves Fénélons because we sat down there eating potatoes with them, gossipping with the man when he was working in his garden, or carrying wine and jelly to the sick beds. They all asked Gray for some improvement, and he granted it to all; and then we would busy ourselves by going to overlook the workmen, and please our zeal by drawing plans, which the builders praised, and for which they substituted their own. We took long walks over the hills, which were at a few miles distance; and Gray carried a book in his pocket, and with enthusiasm unspoiled as yet by other pleasures, and animated by his present mode of existence, read, and made me partake in the stores of his college learning. We often came back late, and though the moonlight shone on the long avenue, and the light, with solemn splendour, rested on the varied front of the old house, yet it was but seldom we were touched with any sacred awe; and far oftener the avenue rang through its silence as we went down it, with our frequent peals of laughter.

"Poor Miss Katherine," said Rooke, one day, when he and an old lady of the parkhouse were standing talking before the rails of her garden; "Poor Miss Katherine, just hear how she does laugh! Bless her, poor

thing! I'm sure something bad's going to happen to her, she is so fool-happy!"

One of these expeditions took us a little further than usual to the highest point of the neighhouring line of hills, which here consisted of a wide unenclosed ridge, affording pasture for sheep; and in a sheltered gully, here and there, was space for a little cottage or two, where the garden fence was made with stones, and a few willows grew near the door. The hot summer's sun burned in the valleys below, but here the elevation of the ground tempered its rays to a delicious fresh warmth, while the still mountain breezes were coming at intervals over the wide extent. Neither was there any want of the brightness of flowers to ornament the mountain green. This part of the hill was covered with the wild heartsease, so that as far as the eye reached, to the next swell of the ground, there was a light yellow glow mingled with the short grass, above which the flowers did not rise more than a half inch. They were not indiscriminately scattered over the entire surface, but that surface was raised into an infinite number of small mounds; probably these were the great stones of the hill, covered gradually by mosses and turf; and on these mounds the heartsease grew. It was a silent wide scene of quiet beauty, spreading out for no reason, except the overflowing loveliness of nature. Gray and I walked quietly along it.

"There has been somebody so happy here, Gray, that nothing will grow since his days, but ease-of-heart," I said.

"Oh, you think so? and what kind of man should one encourage to haunt about the onion beds and to bring up a good crop of tarragon?" said Gray.

"Such a fellow as that, I should think," said I, suddenly observing at a distance a young man reposing on the heartsease, but without much sign that *his* heart profited by the ease. He sat there, his eyes hidden in his hands, and a book upon his knees, out of which he was not reading, for he seemed to us to be doing nothing better than weeping.

We drew near, and finding that it was really so, Gray, without further ceremony, went up, and, touching him on the shoulder, asked him what could be done for him. The young man, ashamed of his emotion, got up, and turned away; he would not speak to us, and, notwithstanding Gray's repeated invitation, was departing, when I perceived his book left behind him, and ran after him, at Gray's suggestion, to give it to him. He could not avoid stopping to take it, and thank me, and finding us so courteous, and willing, if he would let us, to do him some service, he seemed to make an effort on himself, and holding the book out to Gray, said, —

"That's the thing that has made me such a fool, sir; if I had thought anybody was near, I should not have been so, and therefore I'm not to blame as much as if this place were not generally solitary."

Gray took it, and of all the books to make a man cry, what should it be but old Alison on Taste. Gray turned it over and over, doubting how to take this explanation, and the young man seemed equally to doubt if he should go on and make clear what he had begun; but at last he turned over the pages, the book being still in Gray's hand, and fixed upon a passage towards the end, of which the import is that no costly pleasure approaches that which is attainable by everybody, namely,

the pleasure of conversation and the communication of ideas.

"Sir," said the young man, "I had been trying to fancy myself happy, sitting here alone in such a fine scene, and reading an excellent book; but when I came to this place, I found it was of no use to deceive myself, for I am miserable by the want of that very blessing which is here said to be common to all the human race. I never knew anybody to talk to, sir."

Gray could not help smiling, but spoke so kindly that our new companion, if he perceived it, was not discouraged. "You mean nobody who will talk about books, do you?" said Gray; "for on other matters you have companions, I suppose, like the rest of us."

"Oh, sir, don't say the rest of us. I am one who am alone as to all such things as interest me in the world. I am too poor to be educated, and too ignorant to be of any use; and what little I do know, sir, gives me, I think, much more pain than if I were as brutal as the stone I stand upon."

He turned away again to hide his emotion, but Gray laid his hand kindly on his arm and got him by degrees to tell him what was his history. He said it was one he knew but imperfectly himself. His name was Wolfe, and his mother was his only living parent; she was the widow of a soldier in the ranks, who had died when he himself was a mere child. His mother it should seem had been of higher degree, and though suffering great poverty had still imparted to her son tastes and habits which belonged to a better order of circumstances than those in which he found himself. He said that she had a few books of her own, out of which she had taught him to read; but he implied that much further than that

she did not go; so that when he came to perceive their merits and enjoy their views, he found he had outstripped his instructress; and was as much alone in his enjoyment as though the words themselves were unattainable to her. His heart was very full, and he told us everything. He said he never heard any comment, except "That's all very good, and all very right, and all very true:" and when he began to expatiate himself upon the passages which excited him, all the answer he got was, "Don't now, child, I've got a headache; now, don't be tiresome, Jonathan." Beyond the society of his mother there was nobody for him but peasants and farmers; the former were nearest the level of his circumstances, for though he did not work like them, he lived like them on not more than what they earned, namely, about twenty-five pounds a-year. The latter thought it was very kind indeed if they ever admitted his mother and him to tea, and Jonathan, on the contrary, seemed to offend them all by sometimes urging his learning upon them, and sometimes sitting despairingly silent for want of any interest in their discourse.

In short, he was a martyr to the want of talk, and Gray was amused by so new a complaint, and at the same time struck with the reality of it. It would be not very difficult to relieve it by placing him in some employment where his situation would give him society, but upon very little inquiry it was evident that his knowledge was far from adequate to such a change at present. He knew nothing beyond the few books which chance had preserved in his mother's library, and none, of course, furnished very desultory reading. He had got an old book of chemistry, which taught him that Phlogiston was the universal principle of nature. He thought

nobody ever had, or could ever dispute his friend Alison's explanation of the beautiful; but even to know that there was any necessity to account for it at all, was a step a long way in advance of his knowledge of other subjects. The bare rudiments of astronomy, for instance, were quite unknown to him. His mother, it seemed, had once assured him that she had been told the sun stood still, but he innocently gave us this as an example of her prejudices and want of information; and it seemed that he had withstood her doctrine upon the ground of plain reason and evidence of eyesight, until he had converted her to a stout Cartesian.

In the meantime she had given him a good handwriting, and a knowledge of arithmetic as far as the rule of three, and such were his attainments when he now made our acquaintance. It suited Gray's new views of things very well to propose himself as tutor to the young man. At length he offered to give him occasional instruction, and promised books for his solitary studies, as well as comments from his own living voice, and the happiness which this prospect offered was a reward to Gray already. The time for the first lesson was quickly arranged, and we bade him farewell for to-day.

"How many ways there are in the world of being unhappy," said Gray, laughing, as he reflected on this interview. "To think of the poor lad actually weeping because he could get no talk."

The last month of the year was very severe weather. All the neighbours were gathering together for Christmas, and there was abundance of country festivities. Buckwell alone continued solitary; there were no furrows of carriage-wheels along the park, no smoke from the chimneys; the principal rooms were warmed by nothing but

charcoal stoves to keep out the damp, but we were living all the while in a way to please our own vanity much more than the common rule of living could have done. Especially would it have this effect on Gray; for to me it was merely natural and agreeable to keep quiet and out of the way, but with Gray it was different; he was the very person to adorn and be welcome in society. Therefore, it looked like virtue; it looked like something more philosophical than his neighbours to live alone. Certainly there *was* something lovely and quiet in our life, which, if it could have been pursued quite without comparison, was worthy to be dearly loved. The worst of it, but I did not feel that even at the time, was that we were degenerating from the nice and perfect habits of high English life — it is impossible "to make one guinea do the work of five" — and when "the girl" came to put our mutton and potatoes on the table, it was a sight at which a few months ago we should have been shocked, but to which, now, it was yet more shocking that we were growing insensible.

However, though the parlour was bare, the kitchen was full and busy with Christmas preparations for our poorer neighbours. It was the eve of the festival, and that morning we had walked a long way over the snow to see that in every house where it had been ordered, the provisions for to-morrow's dinner, and fuel against the severe season, had been received.

When we came home we found young Wolfe in the little oaken parlour, waiting for Gray to explain a problem to him. Gray invited him to stay for dinner, and he, poor lad, dined between us, and had his talk with such evident satisfaction, that it was pleasant to see a human creature's face so much brightened and changed

for the better. When he was gone, Gray and I drew our chairs close to the fire. It was a severe winter's frost, and everything was white and silent without, but within all was warm and cheerful, though quiet; we were both in sober home dresses; we had our books on the table to read when we should have done conversing. It was the night of a great party at Castle —; the invitation to Gray was lying on the chimney-piece; but he put his arm round my waist, and said, "It is a great deal better to be here, Katherine; I can feel Christmas-day coming on, and *that* they have neither time to do, nor courage to say, even if they did; but I don't mean to speak ill of them. Let every one enjoy his own way of spending his time."

"And ours is such a comfortable way," said I. "I am just enough tired to like sitting here, and to feel too comfortable to move; and if anybody said, Katherine, choose, for the 24th of December, out of all the world what you would like best, I should say, To be sitting with Gray in the parlour at Buckwell, with the fire just that high, and my chair just in this place."

Gray smiled, and then sighed. "Yes," said he, "one does not find the world keep all its promises; the best thing it gives, after all its fine prospects, is a quiet life

'From cities far, and haunts of men,
By mountain tarn or gray oak tree.' "

"You have not tried much yet, Gray."

"Yes, I have. I am young enough, it is very true, but it is not necessary to live many years to find how little truth there is among our fellow-creatures, and what a deceitful, cold-hearted world ours is."

"Nay, I can't tell. I can judge only by what I know; and I know nobody but you, and you are true, kind, and clear as crystal."

"Is crystal kind?" said Gray, smiling again; "but even if it were, I don't know that I have much right to the praise."

"What makes me so happy? what makes all the poor people sing for joy? what has turned poor Jonathan Wolfe's days into prosperity?" said I, feeling no end to the pleasure I had in thinking him the best, the first, the only really good man in the world.

"Nay, that's nothing at all," said Gray; "I wish there were more in it. But it is mere instinct which prefers giving ease to pain. And this is a time of year, this is a night, too, which might make one feel some kindness; it would be a hard heart not to do so."

As he said so, Gray had risen and drawn aside the curtain from the window. The window looked from a terrace down a steep slope to a wide view over the park and distant country. The night was splendid. There was a moon lately up, solemnly rising over the lower part of the sky, and though she shed a wide, rich light far round her, the upper part of the heavens was in darkness, and made a deep back-ground to the innumerable stars. They were forth in myriads; and there was throughout that multitude a motion and a seeming life, seen as they were through the cold winter air, which spoke of some mysterious mode of existence, something common to all that infinity of worlds, which made one's frame thrill with sublime curiosity.

"There are worlds enough to be happy in," said Gray, after we had looked long without speaking. "Even though we should pass a whole life of sorrow here, there

is such an abundance of space, such an eternity there, that we could afford to give up this one."

"The only difficulty," said I, "is to remember those feelings when we come to every-day trouble. So small a trouble puts everything but itself out of your head."

"Yet it ought not," said Gray; "that's a thing to make one ashamed of oneself! Do but think under that magnificent sky what littleness, what vanity, what paltry ambition is going on; how the stars pass over one for hours, and nobody to look upon them; a dozen wax candles are better thought of." — Castle was in Gray's mind I imagined; he was half-pleased, half-melancholy, not to be there. But as he was moralizing at this high flight, a sublunary incident broke in on the train of his misanthropy. On Christmas-eve it was the custom of the country to sing carols, and suddenly two voices, close under the window, struck up in a nasal, countrified tone, one of the common Christmas ballads, the whole matter of which is to adapt the greatest of works to the lowest of minds: —

"This night the Lord of earth and heaven
Was in a manger born,
And news to all mankind was given
They should no longer mourn.

"The angels did not scorn to come
And tell us there was peace,
And that the Lord would bring us home
When earthly things should cease.

"So God He blesses rich and poor,
And shows His pity thus;
May He increase the master's store,
And bow His heart to us!"

No sooner was this verse ended, than both the voices which had been singing, struck out together in prose, and as fast as they could repeat, "A merry Christmas to

you, Sir Gray, and a happy new year when it comes, and many of them;" and then they paused to see what would ensue.

"Poor souls!" said Gray; "they have got the sublimest thoughts in their mouths, mixed up with nothing higher than ale and cheese; for that's the meaning of 'blessing the master's store, and bow his heart to us.' We will call them in."

So saying, he opened the window, and heartily returned their greeting, summoning them into the room, and bidding them sit down at the fire. We never thought of sending away the dessert; it always stood on the further table, which we quitted for the arm-chairs and the fire; so there was wine ready, and Gray poured out two great glasses for them. He drank one to their good health himself, made them sing their carol again, and drank a second time, making amends, as it were, to himself for having spoken ill of human nature, and slightingly of the petty pleasures and cares of the world, and on that account entered more jovially and cordially into their ways of thinking than he would otherwise have done. The men were delighted. I recognised them as not the very best characters in Buckwell, but said nothing about it to Gray; for what was the use of spoiling the pleasure he had taken in their greeting? So they sat, and sang, and drank, till they were none the better Christians; and then Gray turned them gently out, not willing to allow to himself that they had rather spoiled the romance of the scene by abusing his liberality, and preferring to think that both he and they had been greeting the season with mere old English heartiness.

There was something of the same mixture next day,

though, on the whole, it seemed to me to be a model day. Old customs, never broken as yet, become delightful superstitions. And so it was this Christmas. There was the huge log on the hall fire, which in our county it is the custom to cut and keep all the year against this festival.

"It burns well, does not it, Gray? It will be a bright year," said I.

There were the long tables being spread for the villagers, while we stood enjoying the blaze and the warmth, and the church bells were ringing their lustiest peal in the cold, clear air.

The whole peasantry came to church. It was never so full throughout the year as on this day, and it was stuck round with holly-branches and their bright red berries. It was no superstition here, certainly, but a genuine and a reasonable joy, to meet together and miss no familiar face in the house of prayer, and know that not any friendly voice was absent in seeking a common blessing. And when that was over, there was an old custom to be observed between Gray and me which I would not have missed on any account. I pulled off a red berry from a branch on the pew-door, and held it concealed in my hand, to see if he also would remember it. We were just going away, and I was afraid. But he had not forgotten. He pulled one too, and, smiling, gave it to me. So we exchanged our church holly-berries, as we had done every Christmas since we were children.

Then came the jovial dinner in the hall, at which we were present, and carved for our guests. There were old and young women in their cloaks and their clean gowns, the men making every step along the stone floor

doubly audible with their thick nailed shoes. The silence at first; then the gradual clatter of knives and plates; then a few voices, by degrees; and, after dinner a general rising and Christmas greeting and health drinking; and we, in our turns, received a cup apiece, and heartily returned their salutations and their good wishes. This was the loudest moment, the most patriarchal of all. But at its highest pitch there mixed another sound — a very unusual one lately at Buckwell — no other than the great entrance-bell. The room we were in opened at once upon the outer air, and when the summons was answered, the whole scene of peasants, covered tables, and ourselves, was set full before the eyes of the new comer.

"Who is it?" said Gray. "Jonathan Wolfe, I warrant." And he just turned his head to greet him when he should come in, sitting still in his place at the head of the table, the cup in his hand. But it was somebody very different from Jonathan Wolfe. It was a gentleman, a stranger to me at the first moment, who, after a little parley with the servant, to whom it was a great puzzle how both to take care of the horse and show the rider into the room, came in alone, and unannounced, and stared a little at the scene upon which he had fallen, but in another moment came forward, holding his hand very frankly to Gray, with a cordial, "Here I am at last. And how is all with you, my dear Gray?"

"Ha, Carey!" cried Gray, the moment he came in sight, going gladly to meet him; "when did you come? I had not heard you were arrived."

And now *I*, too, recognised an old friend of my brother (if *they* could be old friends who were both so young), who had been abroad for several years, and

whose return we had heard of as about to take place, though we were not aware that he was come.

"And this is Katherine, too," said Mr. Carey. "You scarcely remember me, do you? for three years make more difference to you than to us. But Gray, Gray, you are the same, I hope."

"Ay, that I am, and heartily glad to see you."

"But what are you doing here?" said Mr. Carey, glancing at the tables. "Are you acting Sir Roger de Coverley? Or what is the matter?"

"No," said Gray, "no," and he coloured a little; "it is only a Christmas dinner for my poor neighbours."

"Oh, Christmas dinner, and welcome. But what is the good of eating it, too? Is that a squire's duty?"

"Duty, perhaps not; but pleasure it is," said Gray, a little philosophically.

"Oh, pshaw! What pleasure can it be to sit in this musty atmosphere of greasy cloaks and heads?" said Mr. Carey, speaking very low, so as to be heard by us only. "There's a dinner at my house, too; but I preferred leaving them to the gardener, and coming to see you."

"I am very glad you did," said Gray, "because I should not have gone to you to-day, even if I had known you were come home. I don't think it is enough to feed one's fellow-creatures scornfully, like dogs. I think the kindness one shows them oneself goes further still."

"Yes, yes; I would be as kind to them as you like — that is, I would greet them all by name, as far as I knew, and drink their health, if you think it desirable; but as for any further companionship, I really, Gray, don't believe they think nearly so highly of receiving the honour as we do of conferring it."

"I don't mean to say it is an honour worth thinking

of," said Gray, getting up from the table, a very little vexed at Mr. Carey's view of his proceedings.

"Ay, do get up and come with me into the drawing-room," said Mr. Carey, "and let us have a little talk free from these numerous gaping spectators. They will be as glad to have their own discourse as we to avoid it. Come, Katherine; I suppose I may still call you Katherine, may not I?"

So saying, he pushed aside the chairs, and the whole assembly, seeing we were going, rose, and scraped and bowed a return to our salutation. The drawing-room had no fire, and we passed through it. Our own little room had been somewhat neglected in the cares of the great hall, and had not altogether the appearance of the greatest degree of comfort in the world — but Mr. Carey took no audible notice; only his eye glanced round, plainly observing it all; and he mended the fire and pushed the table into its place before he sat down.

"So you did not hear of my arrival, did you?" said he. "How came that about, for I have been at home these six weeks?"

"Nay, then, why did you not let me know before?" said Gray.

"To tell you the truth, everybody but you has been so kind in their greetings that I thought you had some reason for not coming near me, and I waited to see what you were going to do."

"No, I never heard of it; I never hear anything," said Gray. "I am not much interested in the proceedings of my ordinary neighbours, and no one, I suppose, thought it worth while to give me intelligence which they must be sure I should be glad to receive."

"I think you are more to blame for not inquiring in

general, than they are for not describing in particular," said Mr. Carey; "but, indeed, they told me you were letting your beard grow and declining into misanthropy, and, when I heard that, I determined to come and look after you."

"But it is not true," said Gray; "see, I shaved myself this morning, and you did not find me in a misanthropic scene, did you?"

"Oh, among the poor people? no; but why not be kind to the rich also?"

"Why, Carey, to tell you the truth, I began my present system from motives of economy; but I find so many good reasons for congratulating myself upon my choice of retired habits that it is scarcely probable I shall now ever alter them."

"What good reasons?" said Mr. Carey; "for instance, what good reason can you give for not having been at — Castle yesterday? People were talking about you. It is not good to make oneself talked about at your age."

"Why, what harm could they say of me? May not a man take his own way?"

"No; the general world has found the one which is right on the whole; and if, without reason, any one prefers the by-paths, he will excite surprise and regret."

"Regret, oh no! I am sure no one regretted me; and, as to reasons, I was busy in the morning."

"So was I, but that did not make me idle in the evening. Now what were you doing, Gray?"

"Doing? oh, I had a great deal to do."

"You were shooting?"

"No, no."

"You were receiving rents?"

"No; in fact I was busy among the poor people;

and was not it better," said Gray, waxing bolder as he spoke, "to take care they all had their Christmas comforts than to spend my day in killing, and my night in eating pheasants?"

"Pshaw, Gray; half the people who were at — Castle at night, had been busy in the same way as you in the morning. You don't mean to tell me that because you had a village or two to ride over, you could not come to dinner at seven o'clock. No, no; a better reason if you please."

While he thus attacked Gray, I could see that there was, at the same time, an anxious degree of observation in his eyes, and that he listened to the answers he got less gaily than he addressed the questions. He seemed bent upon breaking through the habits which Gray was forming; and, notwithstanding the mortification he could not but perceive that he inflicted, he went on resolutely; yet, at the same time, with a careless good humour and a kindliness to Gray which made it seem as if he did not know he was saying any but the simplest thing in the world. He told us about himself since he had been abroad: we knew he had married, but he talked of Mrs. Carey and took it for granted that his friend was to visit her, and receive them both, and join in all the sociable plans in which he himself seemed involved.

Gray drew back — "No," he said; "his resolution was taken; his establishment was reduced to his own standard of comfort; but that of the world was different. If any friend liked him well enough to visit him on his own terms he should be delighted to see them; but he would not receive what he was resolved not to give, and therefore he was determined to remain at home."

"Then I'll try this very day," said Mr. Carey.

"I will dine with you and see what is your standard of comfort; I will at least try if my friendship can stand it; and if it positively cannot — then, Gray, you must alter."

So saying, he settled himself by the fire, and when they got again into discourse, I went out of the room to see what chance there was for a decent dinner, but Gray was true enough to his resolutions to follow me, and desire that nothing might be altered from our regular way of proceeding.

The cook, however, was of a different opinion; from the moment she heard that a gentleman dined with us her peace of mind was lost. Instead of devoting her faculties as usual to roast meat and boil potatoes they went astray upon side dishes, and nothing could bring them back to their original destination. Dinner time came but not dinner, and, an hour after Mr. Carey's arrival, she was coming in search of me to know whether they should put laurustinus round the salad bowl.

We waited in the oak parlour while these processes went on. Gray looked uneasy; Mr. Carey did not at all seek to diminish the awkwardness of the pause, he rather exaggerated it by affecting to believe we had disguised our mode of living, and that something pompous was in preparation; "and, in fact," said he, "it will a great deal better suit this stately old place than habits which belong to a cottage, Gray."

However, in course of time, the groom opened the door and said dinner was ready, and then he shut it again. Gray reopened it, saying, "Our custom was to dine in our little parlour, and this awkwardness was one of the consequences of changing our usual place."

"And a very bad custom it is," said Mr. Carey, shivering as we entered the dining-room, where the fire only half burned, and there was a feeling that it had not been inhabited for days. "This is the consequence of living alone. Katherine lets you have your own way, and your way is to degenerate into an uncomfortable old bachelor."

"No it is not; but when there are few servants one must spare them."

"Why not get more?" said Mr. Carey. "Surely, dear Gray, the income of these estates entitles you to the common comforts at least of a gentleman."

"No doubt," said Gray, "but there are other reasons."

"And what are they?" said Mr. Carey, gently. "If you mean charitable calls upon you, they may all be answered, yet leave....."

"I don't mean that at all," said Gray, laughing. "I have no fancy of the kind. Indeed, I don't think I have any fancy about it, or not much of one, but for the present I am very poor, and I'll tell you how it is." And he then proceeded to give him a statement of the whole condition of affairs between him and his guardian.

Mr. Carey listened attentively. "I am very glad I understand it," said he. "Things are very differently represented in the neighbourhood; and it is a relief to me to know why you have acted thus."

"Do they trouble themselves so much about our concerns?" said Gray. "What is it they say of me?"

"Oh, all sort of things. I'll tell you some day, perhaps, but for the present let me advise you to stop them by resuming an evening coat in the evening, and order-

ing your mutton to be sent up roasted, not raw, when a friend dines with you."

This interview with his old friend gave the first stroke to Gray's ascetism. He did not, indeed, acknowledge it at the time; on the contrary, he said he was sorry that so good a fellow as Carey should not be able to take things as he found them, and feel, with himself, a due contempt for outer circumstances. He even went resolutely to return the visit on his rough pony; but I suppose felt something wrong practically, for a day or two after he discovered that he must have one more horse, and that horse, when bought, was so good that it was necessary to have another groom. Mr. Carey managed very skilfully; he never argued with him; he never made him feel himself a persecuted hero; but rather a persecuting one, who used his power to do ridiculous and disagreeable things. All the time he showed how much he liked Gray's society, and how proper he was to mix, and be mixed, with the world.

It was only a fancy after all, grafted upon circumstances the necessity of which he exaggerated. It was against Gray's nature; and opposition and love of novelty had been its chief supports. Therefore gently, and one thing after another, he returned into society, reformed his house again, and began himself first to laugh at our past year, and then to wish to hear of it no more. His friend assisted him in resuming old habits, and in furnishing such an establishment as suited the moderate income he received from Mr. Mainwaring; and when summer was come he was again much what he had been a twelvemonth ago, except that expenses were better regulated, and that young Wolfe continued to be an ob-

ject of interest and attention, though he had other instructors than Gray.

I myself, selfishly speaking, was not much obliged to Mr. Carey. Gray did not go out a great deal, but as I went not at all, every absence from home was one from me too. I suddenly learned that it was possible something should separate us, and having never formed any wish, or contemplated any prospect but what had Gray for its corner stone, this idea was one which gave me as much alarm as pain. I used to sit fancying to myself, "Where is he now? What is he doing to-day? Whom is he talking to?" and I never heard the name of some first acquaintance, if it was a woman and young, but what she seemed destined to be the being fatal to my happiness. "Will he forget me?" thought I; "shall I become nothing better than a third person in his society — one who is not to hear, not understand his thoughts, which I have known till now all my life long — shall not it be I to write for him, talk to him, laugh with him — do his errands, keep his counsels — am I to lose all this?"

But then, again, when Gray came home heart-whole, I used to quarrel with myself, and laugh at myself; and in the joy of seeing and being safe of him, at least for that time, rise into such high spirits, and increase and multiply my gladness in his society so greatly, that he would grow even kinder than ever; and all this, while it added to my present pleasure, did but increase the future susceptibility to pain.

Gray's acquaintance as yet was not very numerous; of intimate friends he had but Mr. Carey and Dr. Monkton. This latter was a gentleman three times his own age, who had been a friend of our father's, and who

had transmitted his affection in undiminished quantity, though of a different kind, to the son; including me also under a portion of it. He was a physician; and was so far advanced in fortune and reputation as to be able to retire for four months every year into the country, and leave his practice and his patients to be ready for his return. There was a very romantic story attached to him, which, looking at his red face and considering his precise, old bachelor habits, one would not have suspected. But there was something when one knew him better, which seemed to intimate that he might have gone through trying scenes and hours. It might be fancy, however, for he never said one word on the subject, and, intimate as I have been with him, I never dared inquire how much of the things reported was true and how much false.

The tale was this: — When he was quite a young man, and only beginning to make some little progress and money in his profession, it was said that the strange chance had happened to him to revive the apparently dead body of a subject brought to him, he knew not whence, for dissection. Whether this part of the story was really true, or had been adopted to account for subsequent circumstances, I cannot tell. Certain it is, that the knowledge and belief of the story grew up with me, and it was very long before I thought of doubting it. What further is certain, is, that all the few friends he had at that time remembered a most beautiful woman who lived with him, and whom he declared to be his wife, but few believed her to be so. A profound mystery hung over her, none ever hearing of father or mother, or former friend of any kind. It was not many, indeed, who had the opportunity of inquiring, for not above two

or three persons were ever admitted intimately to their house. The name by which he called her was Umbra. Whether it was a fictitious name or a real one, he would not say. The report which these persons made of her was, that she was exquisitely lovely; but as far as intercourse went, little better than some warm marble, to which Dr. Monkton had given a dose of the elixir of life. The story goes, that, like those Athenians who recovered from the plague, all trace of her former existence had been erased from her memory, by the illness which had consigned her to the grave, and that she retained neither any recollection of past events, nor, except the use of language, any trace of what knowledge she might formerly have acquired. However that might be, 'Monkton loved her better than every clever and learned creature of the earth, and during the years of their connexion, he gave his friends the idea of a man who has one sole interest for ever present to his imagination.

It was about two years after it first became known that this beautiful shadow inhabited his house, that a merchant, who had a tolerably intimate acquaintance with Dr. Monkton, returned from abroad, and chanced to be admitted to the presence of his shadowy inmate. He seemed wonderfully struck by her, and afterwards told Dr. Monkton that if he had not seen his own wife in the tomb, he could not but have believed that she and this beautiful creature were the same. Monkton repelled the idea with an indignation for which there seemed to his friend no cause; but the cause, I suppose, was the frightful fear that it was true. She, however, was wholly unmoved at sight of the stranger, and this comforted Dr. Monkton a little, and prevented him from

taking any steps for the absolute exclusion of Provost, for so was the young merchant named. Provost, for his part, desired nothing more than to come frequently to the house, and indulge the pleasure he felt in looking at the image of one whom he had lost in the height of love and youth; and at last, unlike any other of their acquaintance, came alone, and in the morning, and succeeded in getting admitted to the presence of the mistress of the house, even when the master was absent. Dr. Monkton learned this with some displeasure, and forbade the continuance of his visits. Umbra was willing, nay, seemed glad to concur in the prohibition, and Monkton informed his friend that the arrangements of his very small and secluded establishment prevented him from receiving guests, except when invited.

His friend thought him jealous, and acquiesced; but it excited rather than discouraged him, and he sought every occasion to elude the prohibition. A few days after it had been given, he made some pretext for calling in the evening, and succeeded in establishing himself in the little drawing-room. Here he endeavoured to talk to the lovely shadow more than was the custom of Monkton's guests. It was necessary for him to bear the chief burden of the conversation, for he got few words from her, and almost fewer looks; and, in order to keep conversation alive, he told anecdotes and described scenes, to which she gave a mere passive attention.

"I was walking," said he, "with only one person along the edge of the cliff I have described to you. The sea was many hundred feet below us; the precipice went sheer down to its brink. On a sudden a great

layer of the rock seemed to unjoint itself from the rest, and a rent yawned between the ledge we stood on and the main mass of the mountain. My companion sprang into my arms. I feel her now."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Umbra. "That is a dream. I know it is a dream. Don't speak; but is not it a dream?"

At Umbra's voice, at her most unusual manner, Dr. Monkton started up, and then ran to her, and received her in his arms.

"Oh, Monkton, I cannot bear to hear anybody else talk of that dream. It seems to become real again. His foot slipped just on the very edge!"

"Oh, God! who told you that?" cried Provost, in the most vehement agitation.

She looked up, and full at him, when she heard these tones of his voice, screamed aloud, and shrank into Monkton's bosom, pressing her hands on her forehead. Provost was no less agitated. He would have seized her hands; but she turned away from him with such agony of fear that life seemed unable to support it, and, gathering herself closer into Monkton's bosom, she fainted like one dead.

He carried her from the room, and would suffer no one to hear the words of reviving consciousness from her lips. But from this moment he could no longer repress the idea that Umbra had been the wife of this man. Yet he did not allow it to separate her interest from his. The grave itself had given her to him. He had devoted all the affections of his soul to her. Any right to claim her by another he cast off as a weak pretence, which, if she should urge, would be mere proof that she loved another better than she did him.

This was the idea that people said haunted him, and, in the fury of his jealousy and his love, he made it the sole question between himself and Umbra. She, in the mean time, with purer instincts, saw the same idea very differently. With her it was a wandering notion, which terrified her like some dreadful phantom. Her love for Monkton had absorbed every faculty that remained to her, and whatever interfered with it was terrible to her imagination. When a dark and doubtful sense of duty, then, came between her and him, it was repelled by all the efforts of her will. And yet at times it seemed to overshadow her in a shape which she was not able to drive away. She was frightened at herself when happiest in his presence, and he was vehement with her in proportion to his adoration and his jealousy.

Provost, in the meantime, became aware of the misery which had grown up in the house of his friend, and knew that he himself was the cause. The extreme beauty of Umbra, and her resemblance to his wife, moved him strongly to compassion and interest; and, firmly believing that she was not the wife of Monkton, he felt but little scruple, when he learned how she was now treated, in endeavouring to induce her voluntarily to quit her present home for his. A horrible wavering notion seems to have possessed her that Provost had a right to command her to do so. Then, again, she lost sight of it, and only a vague idea that she was to be cast off by Monkton darkened her imagination.

When Monkton learned from her own lips the struggle she was enduring, the last hold upon his passions gave way. They broke that hour over their boundaries, and spread their own ruin around them. In his madness he himself hurried her from the house, and

led her to Provost's door. There he furiously rang, and, hearing some one running to open it, he started away like the wind, and, rushing into his own desolate house, locked himself in his room, and neither answered nor summoned the frightened servant who beheld his return.

It was a winter night of tempest, but there was no fire nor light in Monkton's room. He was not heard to stir from the moment he entered it; and the servant who watched a little while at his chamber-door, and once or twice knocked timidly, was fain to retire at last, and conceal her fears for her master in her still greater awe of him. Morning came, and she once more tried to obtain an answer; but all was silent within his room. After a few moments, however, she had forgotten her awe of him, on beholding an object of yet greater terror. She screamed his name in a voice which prevailed over his passions. It made him spring up, unbolt the lock, and the door was thrust open as he did so by the trembling servant. She dragged him to the step of the entrance, and there lay the dead Umbra, frozen to death. No doubt she had followed him in his flight, and had not attempted to enter, since he had driven her away, and had sat down and died on the step. Monkton took her up in his arms, and for three days he never loosed the dead body, not though the dreadful taint of corruption spread over it. At the end of that time his brain reeled, and his strength wavered. His arms, in spite of himself, gave way to force; she was taken from him, and he sank into a stupor from which it was long before he recovered.

A short outbreak of remorse followed, and then he shut up her name in silence as profound as the grave

which a second time held her. He made no confidant; he gave no detail. One journey he took as soon as he was released from the restraint to which his temporary alienation of reason had reduced him, and at that time he was too much absorbed in his own feelings to care whether he was observed or not. They thought he intended to open the tomb of Umbra, and see her with his own eyes in the last resting-place. They watched him, but he did not go there. He went to the vault where the wife of Provost was recorded on the marble to lie, and caused the lid of the coffin to be lifted which bore her name. The lid was lifted, and the coffin was an empty one.

Years had passed since the date of this story of Dr. Monkton. Whatever part was true or false, at all events time enough had gone by to make him a very different person from what he had been then. It should seem by the story that he had erred on the side of imagination; now, however, there was not a man in the world more on his guard against all indulgence of that faculty. Nobody could treat more contemptuously all the race of sensibilities; all emotions; all fine feelings: he required one to be satisfied with anything for which a reason could be given, and considered it quite enough objection to be able to say, "That is of no use." This was his theory; but when he was under influence himself, his practice was less severe; and in Gray, for example, he could perceive the propriety of tastes, and even love and laugh at those fancies and eagerness of youth and high spirits, which he condemned in me. Gray led, Dr. Monkton involuntarily followed; but with me it was different. I was neither splendid, nor independent, nor very brave on my own account; and he seized on me as

the proper object for his tuition, while I obeyed him as the lawful holder of authority.

It was very evident that philosophy was made on purpose for me. I was ugly, and philosophy says beauty is of no sort of consequence; I held to happiness by one only tie, and that was my connexion with Gray, which the natural progress of life and its events threatened almost visibly to weaken. Philosophy said that self-dependence was the finest state of mental existence, and that solitude had charms of the first order for those who knew how to enjoy it. To impart philosophy to me, therefore, was a favourite aim of Dr. Monkton; and I was a very docile pupil — only in my heart I never either understood nor allowed that it would not be better to be rich, admirable, and happy, than to be poor, plain, and philosophical.

Many a time at Buckwell he and Mr. Carey, Gray and I, made up a sociable four-cornered party. Mr. Carey came frequently, but not his wife, for ours was still a bachelor establishment, and Gray was afraid of inviting so fine a lady as Mrs. Carey. She also liked better to have Gray on a visit to her than to hazard one to him during the shooting season, when the whole long morning he and his companions would be *out* of her way, and I should be *in* it: so her husband came alone. Dr. Monkton was an accustomed guest, and I was just so much mistress as a woman always must be who is the only woman in the house, and yet so little of one as was natural, considering that all my three companions had not done looking upon me as a child.

"Carey, shall we go wider a-field this morning; shall we try after a blackcock?" said Gray, one fine autumn day at breakfast.

"With all my heart," said Mr. Carey. "Is there a good breed this year?"

But while Gray began to answer this question, Dr. Monkton interposed. "A blackcock," said he, "there can't be such a thing within five miles. Do you mean to walk five miles before you begin your sport?"

"Yes," said Gray, "I am very willing; though we will take the ponies to the foot of the hill if you like, Carey."

"Oh, no!" said Mr. Carey; "they may meet us to come home; but we will go over the ground where I want you to plant, and settle that matter on the way."

"Another mile or two," said Dr. Monkton. "Now, when I was a young man, and set off in life with forty pounds a-year, I used to walk, it may be, five miles in a morning, and add two for the sake of some patient worth a guinea; but I always said to myself, 'When you are a rich man, John Monkton, you shall ride all day in a chariot.'"

Gray laughed. "But," said he, "would you have us make war on the game, like the ancient Britons, out of our chariot windows?"

"I did not know the Britons used windows," said Dr. Monkton, smiling; "and also I do not see the necessity of making war on the game at all."

"What! not for our health's sake?" said Gray; "not for the useful object of invigorating our bodily activity?"

"Which is our sole purpose in the pursuit of game," said Mr. Carey.

"I know a man," said Dr. Monkton, "who secured his health, and obtained fourteen hours of study a-day, by taking rhubarb pills instead of exercise."

Gray and Mr. Carey looked at each other and burst out laughing. Dr. Monkton chuckled also.

"The only objection I have to that plan, dear Doctor," said Gray, "is, that I consider it the duty of the master of a house to provide for the sustenance of his household. I am obliged to kill game that the pundit and the squaw may have a dinner; otherwise, I had much rather remain at home improving my mind with study and conversation — had not you, Carey?"

"Oh, much rather," said Mr. Carey; "but suppose, as our duty carries us a-field, we prevail on the pundit to accompany us, and enlighten our intellect as we go along? Now, do, Dr. Monkton," said he, changing his tone. "You shall ride, and we will walk with you!"

"What shall I ride, pray?" said Dr. Monkton, in a tone that suited either an assent or a dissent as things might turn out.

"The new pony — the cob," said Gray. "Ring the bell, Katherine, and order him." I jumped up as eager as Gray.

"Stop, Katherine," said Dr. Monkton; "another word or two on that matter. Do you mean by the new pony that great fierce beast with a ruffian tail, and eyes like a devil?"

"Oh, he is the quietest creature," said Gray; "is not he, Katherine? You rode him with me, you know, on Wednesday."

"*Quite* quiet," said I.

"She would ride an earthquake after you," said Dr. Monkton; "but so won't I. He would very likely throw me, and if there is a man on earth whom I despise, it is the man who is thrown from horseback."

"I should not have thought," said Mr. Carey, "you had so much respect for horsemanship."

"I have none," answered Dr. Monkton. "I despise a man for giving a brute the opportunity of getting such power over him."

"Well, then," said Gray, "you shall have the old silver-tail, that was mine in former days, and Katherine shall come too and ride the pony with devil's eyes." And so, at last, to my delight it was arranged, and away we all went together.

The day and the country were beautiful, and enjoying both, we reached in due time the ground where they were to shoot — a wood of birch and fir, rather high on the hill, where the black game was wont to frequent. Here Dr. Monkton and I dismounted; and the Doctor, quite forgetting all his philosophy, went with the shooters; eager to see the birds killed, careful to keep in the appointed line, as though he knew all about it, and remarking on the qualities of the dogs, in which he was sometimes mistaken. I heard the shots sometimes further, sometimes nearer, and enjoyed the delicious smell and look of the wood, animated as the scene was by the sound of amusement and pleasure. I sat down under a fir tree, and indulged in folly. "How good this is," I thought; "how much better than philosophy; well says the rhyme: —

'When house and lands are gone and spent,
Then learning is most excellent;'

but only *then*. This is best while it lasts — free air, health, exercise, companions. Oh, if I may choose, I'll have all these, and hang philosophy . . . . . ."

And so I was going on, when, close to my ear, a shot rattled by. I started up as the second barrel was

fired, and the charge went through my bonnet. "Hold hard!" I cried; "why, Gray, you've spoiled my bonnet!" for I was not at all frightened, the danger being past.

He was, however, when he saw how near he had been to killing me. He became quite pale, and I felt him tremble as I caught hold of his arm.

"Nay, Gray, I'm not hurt; I am not touched even. But what made you shoot me?"

"If I had, my sister," he said, catching me in his arms, "I would have put my gun to my head, and killed myself too."

"Why, Miss Katherine," said old Rooke, who was here, on his own old pony, "Sir Gray was nigh putting you out of your misery."

I laughed, and Gray, when he saw we were observed, instantly changed his tone. "Ay, but a miss is as good as a mile. So we are all safe, except the blackcock, I hope. Ah, there he is, still struggling! Put an end to him."

"He can't be no deader," said Rooke, holding up the bird, which had now fluttered its last.

Dr. Monkton and Mr. Carey came up hastily, for they had heard that something had happened, and the reporter made the worst of it; so they were glad to find nothing dead but the bird.

"That is as you might have been," said Dr. Monkton, looking at the blackcock and at me.

"Nonsense," cried Gray, turning away.

"Only," continued Dr. Monkton, "nobody would have had the charity to wring your neck. On the contrary, Gray would have been on his knees to me to torment you with vain remedies."

"Oh, don't think that," said Gray, resolved not to be

outdone by me in valour; "I should only have bade 'em bring the largest bag for my game."

The men who attended, grinned, yet seemed doubtful how I should take it. Mr. Carey did not like the tone in which Gray spoke before people who could not understand him, and tried to recall him to their sport. But, under all his affected carelessness, Gray still trembled, and could not certainly have fired a straight shot.

"No," said he, "let us first sit down and eat our luncheon; it must be time, I think; and Katherine shall have some off my own plate, and drink out of my own cup, and sit close — close to me," he added, drawing me down on the grass beside him, and tenderly pressing my waist with his arm, when nobody could observe the action.

We all wished to talk; but after the luncheon was produced, and our places taken at the foot of the fir tree, there was a silence; for it had been a great escape, and put other trains of thought out of sight for a little while. Dr. Monkton spoke first. "It makes us grave to think what might have been," said he. "Nothing is so practical as Nature in its teaching. It is true that Reason says there is no such thing for us as to undo — no power in the supremest man to bring back the event of a single instant. Yet we never believe it till some such instant is passed as we would give our all to recall."

"True enough," said Mr. Carey. "And how many times we say it was just touch and go with such a catastrophe, or such a one's life, and soon forget it, because it was *go*, and not *touch*."

"A doctor sees the fatal side oftener than another," said Dr. Monkton, "and thinks as little of it. I saw it once, when it struck me dumb; though I was a fool for

my pains, for it was only the exciting circumstances which made it more pungent than many a similar case."

"What was it?" I asked; for I loved Dr. Monkton's stories, and he was not often in the mood to tell them.

"It was a thing you may read in a book," said he; "but as a living witness is better than a dumb book, I'll tell you. I was in Paris in '42, and my friend Dr. Bauny and I had been walking, and turned into the Rue de la Révolte, from the Bois de Boulogne. There was a crowd by the door of a grocer, about half-way up the street, and when we came near, they told us the Duke of Orleans lay within, dying. You remember, his carriage was run away with, and, jumping out, he pitched on his head, and was killed. We both thought we might be of use, and went in. We were the first doctors that came; but nothing could be done. Prince or peasant, it was the same to him, for he never knew the world again. There lay the heir of France on the mean and dirty sofa of the shopman's back room; and the might of France, the power of a king, was as powerless to help him as the poverty of a beggar would have been. Help there was enough — too much help; but the spirit was breaking up the frame-work, and returning it to earth. Very soon came his father and mother, and his sister Clémentine. We doctors stayed in the room, and there was a priest. I remember the Queen had got flowers in her bonnet. I have never forgotten those flowers. They went to my heart by their disagreement with her sorrow more than if her grey hair had been streaming over her shoulders. Last of all, when it was but clay that lay there — no son, no prince, merely princely clay — it was put upon a bier, and carried forth and down the street, to be laid in a

chapel. The King and Queen, and the sister and two of the brothers, walked beside. It was a piteous sight. Yes, that was a piteous sight! Their grief was the cause that they went on foot beside their dead. Their rank would have set them in the carriages that waited there. But royalty was all behind, sunk and out of comparison with their grief. There were soldiers guarding them — escorting them, as it is termed; but nothing seemed belonging to them except their dead son and their misery — helpless, hopeless misery."

The tears came into Dr. Monkton's eyes as he told this story, and none of us made any comment for the moment. He first spoke again.

"Ay, ay," said he; "the first class accidents are fewer than the third class. But history can still tell sad stories of the death of kings. Froissart's very words for Charles VIII. apply to this fine young fellow: — 'Ainsi départit si puissant et si grand roi, et en si miserable lieu, qui avait tant de belles maisons, et si ne sut à ce besoin finir d'une pauvre chambre.' But, for my part, I believe that most people, let them be where and who they will, die alone. They are alone, however they are surrounded. God knows what may be the thoughts passing in that head which the tenderest bosom supports. It may be as solitary as the wretch who dies on the bare rock. It is the habits of the mind, the old customs and uses, that come in then, something as they do in a sleeping man. You may see sometimes the greatness, and sometimes the meanness and the oddity, that have been hid in a man's heart. The friends cry at everything, of course; but the doctor does not. I remember when I was a young doctor, and had time to spare, that I was requested to sit by a dying man's bed, exactly be-

cause I had announced that morning that there was nothing to be done for him. 'Oh, then, you *must* stay till all is over,' said they; 'it would be terrible if he should die and you not by him.' I did not know or ask why it would be so terrible, but I knew they must give me another fee; so I sate by the fire as long as they pleased. He was a very rich old fellow, who had always had his own way up to this very hour, and who had been accustomed to use his voice, and deliver his orders in peremptory style. Now, however, his voice was failing him, and being confused with dying, he could not think what ailed him not to move and scold as usual. His daughter was in the room; and, as she was growing into a great heiress all the time her father was dying, the whole assembly took her view of the case, and put on the most proper, laudatory, and lamentable faces in the world. To do her justice, she had no thought about her own coming importance; she was full of nothing but her father; and, though he had been a cross-grained parent to her all her days, she was as much frightened and concerned to see his death as natural instincts and impulses could make her. Well, the old man, with his eyes half closed, and a voice which you might perceive to be strained to its highest pitch, though it was no louder than just to be called sound, was complaining of everything, without having so much as the comfort of knowing that everybody was trying to please him. Presently, while his daughter was doing her best to settle his nightcap comfortably, for it was all in wrinkles, he made an effort beyond common to speak to her, and even edged himself an inch nearer, holding open his eyes and looking at her. They all thought he was going to kiss her, and give her his blessing, and she sobbed

and leaned down to hear him. 'If you do that again,' said he, making violent exertion to speak, 'I'll knock you down!'"

Dr. Monkton's conclusion made me laugh, and then I was ashamed of laughing, and was very near crying. He gave me a glass of water from the luncheon; and, turning to Gray, said, "I have talked enough for one morning; come, Gray, 'tis your turn now, let us hear if you have an appropriate anecdote."

And then Mr. Carey observed the evening was hot, and we had a long journey home, so let it be short as well as good, and begin at once.

"Very well, very well," said Gray, forcing his voice to gaiety; "I am willing. What shall it be? Didactic, I think; yes. The fir grove waved in the evening blast; the sun glanced on the noble figures of three men and one damsel; suddenly, they all sprang on their feet and went home. That's all."

"Nonsense, Gray," cried I, starting up, as he also rose, and jumping once or twice out of mere excitement; but the other two, though they laughed also, said it was a very judicious catastrophe; and, Dr. Monkton and I mounting our ponies, we all set off back to Buckwell.

The next morning, Mr. Carey went home and Gray with him. They were to stay together a few days, and Dr. Monkton and I were left alone together at Buckwell. The time passed pleasantly enough with us. Most part of the morning Dr. Monkton passed in the library; another part he generally read with me, if I could not invent any excuse for getting away from him. After that, he liked very well to take a quick walk with me; and the more successfully I had avoided him in the morning, the more amiable and eager in pleasing him I was in

the afternoon; and it was evident to me that he preferred a young, half-taught girl like myself, whom he could teach, scold, laugh with, and sometimes compliment a little, to the society of any learned doctor of his own age and level. I was unconsciously conscious of this, and took a little pleasure in feeling my womanhood.

On the fourth morning, I was surprised by an announcement in a letter from Gray, that Mrs. Carey intended to come to Buckwell that very day, with her husband and him. There was to be no preparation — nobody invited to meet her — he had persuaded her to come over and pay him a visit; and he was glad of it, he added, for she was a very agreeable woman. I was not glad at all. I stood in awe of Mrs. Carey, on grounds of which Gray could have no idea. I was afraid of her wardrobe, of her sarcasms, of her contempt, of her conversation. I did not know how to entertain her after dinner; and I did not like the idea of Gray coming in and finding her suppressing a yawn. Dr. Monkton said it was quite indifferent to him whether she came or not; but, as I passed his dressing-room door that day, I heard him say to his servant, "Put out the new velvet waistcoat."

A little before dinner, Mrs. Carey arrived. Gray was driving her in her little open carriage. She seemed radiant with smiles and good humour; and when she came down for dinner, I could not but acknowledge that she had every right to be a very agreeable woman, for she was as beautiful as a picture. She was delicately fair, with dark hair parting over her forehead, and clustering in curls, so as to frame her face and throat. Her eyes were long and deeply fringed. These eyes had the habit of looking full in the face of the person

she was talking with, if she liked that person, and at the same time had a very slight motion, which gave a tinge of shiness to their expression. Her mouth was round at the ends, and arched in the middle. She was hardly tall; the figure corresponded with the delicacy of her features and complexion; her hands were white and small, and her shoulders so well rounded that people always thought that by getting the patterns of her collars and capes, they should obtain the grace which they observed their own collars and capes were deficient in.

When she came into the room, I was talking to Mr. Carey and Gray, and hearing with glee all they had to tell me of what had passed during their absence, but from the moment she entered I was silent. She appropriated the conversation to a style and conducted it in a tone which I had not any means of sharing, and if I was talked to at all, it must be as to one who was not of the circle. Gray took every possible pains to amuse his guest; and it was plain that he would have considered a failure to be entirely his fault, not *hers*, by any means. Mr. Carey was talking in the same strain as his beautiful wife; and Dr. Monkton, I found, had store of gallantries, and dry agreeable anecdotes of high life at the service of this fair dame, which had lain in the dark all the time till she came. Gray made a sign to me at last to retire to the drawing-room, and Mrs. Carey's inclination of the head at my invitation so to do, was nearly the first token she had given of recognising my presence. Anxious were my thoughts as I opened the drawing-room door for her and followed her in, and I felt quite grateful when she answered, graciously, my very entertaining observation that I thought it was five miles from her house to Buckwell.

"I dare say it is," said she; "but the roads are excellent."

"They are much better than they were," said I.

"Ah," said Mrs. Carey, arranging her hair in the glass; "are they?" Then, after a pause, "What, they were not always good?"

"Not always," said I, quite charmed at such a mark of interest; "but Gray's steward understands road-making very well, and since he has been overseer they have been improved very much."

"No, really?" said Mrs. Carey.

She can't care the least about it. She does not know what I said, thought I, straining my brain for something better; but, before I found it, Mrs. Carey, as if returning from her own thoughts, began again.

"So your brother's steward understands roadmaking?"

I could not bear this; I got off the subject in haste. "Yes, I believe so," said I. "You play a great deal, don't you, Mrs. Carey?"

"I? play? Ah! you mean on the piano-forte — oh, yes, I play."

"Would you be so very good as to play to me, then?" said I.

"Oh, yes, to be sure, if you like it — but not directly after dinner; in a few minutes I will. Won't *you* play in the meantime? Do now;" and all the while she was lighting a candle, in order to leave the room. "I'll fetch my work," said she; "I hope I shan't go to sleep; but I'm uncommonly stupid to-night. Thank you," as I opened the door — and it is to be supposed that sleep overcame her in her own room, for she did not reappear till half an hour was gone by, coffee cold and hot again, and the party from the dining-room had come

in. Her slumbers seemed to have been very refreshing, for she was in great spirits all the rest of the evening.

Next day Mrs. Carey, who was not a lazy fine lady, came down to the early breakfast which the sportsmen had ordered. I almost hoped she would not come — but she did; and professed herself interested in all that was going on, and had no terror of guns, nor horror of dogs, nor amazement at fatigue, nor disgust at the cruelty of shooting. Gray was pleased — any one might see he was pleased, by the interest taken in his pursuits, and I thought to myself that it was odd he should believe a beauty, and a woman, and a fine lady really wanted to know anything about gun locks, or that her misplaced questions meant anything more than "Talk to me, think of me, admire me."

Gray generally perceived affectation in a moment; Dr. Monkton suspected it when it was sometimes absent. "Don't go into a rapture, Katherine," he would say; "just say, I like it — not, I *do* delight in it. Delight is an uncommon emotion."

However, in this instance, Gray took all her pretty mistakes for genuine; all her inappropriate conjectures for amusing ignorances. Dr. Monkton smiled, and added his wit to her graceful nonsense; and Mr. Carey seemed to be habitually subject to the delusions under which Gray was labouring. I observed that in all her zeal to sweep in to herself the admiration of every one present, that of her husband was the point she had most seriously at heart. "Is not it true, Caro," she would say, if he had been too long a time without joining in her conversation with Gray; "don't I do this? don't I do that?" and if he did not answer quite freely and fully, she

asked another question, and another, till satisfied with his tone of voice.

"Come, Gray, we must be off," said Mr. Carey, looking at his watch, "it grows late."

"Why don't you go? I've been telling you to go this half hour," said Mrs. Carey; "you are no sportsman. I can't conceive how you can linger in the house this fine morning."

"It is very seldom I do so," said Gray, rising and smiling; "in general I find nothing more attractive than bird-catching, as you call it."

"Why, what else would you call it? — fowling; bagging; what is it?" said Mrs. Carey.

"Indeed, dear Gray," thought I, while he joined Mrs. Carey in laughing at what she had said, "our breakfasts have been what you thought very agreeable."

"Caro," said she, as her husband walked towards the window without having heard her, "what harm is there in saying bird-catching? Sir Gray is quarrelling with me for using the word."

"I quarrel with you?" said Gray. "Indeed..."

"Caro," said she, interrupting him, "is there any harm?"

"You must not hope, Gray, to teach Mrs. Carey the right use of language," said he; "she can't understand yet the insult of saying the dogs, instead of the hounds."

"But they *are* dogs, dear," said Mrs. Carey, laughing, "are not they?"

"So are doctors men," said Dr. Monkton; "but next time you have a cold and send for me, is your maid to run in and cry, 'The man is coming?'"

Mrs. Carey rewarded him with another laugh, and then there was a general move, and the two sportsmen

settled their plans and took their leave. Mr. Carey nodded to Dr. Monkton and me, in one. I stood quite still, watching Gray, whether he would not have a few words, an errand, a question for me as usual. I followed him about with my eyes, when he came to leave the room, but he was bidding Mrs. Carey a good-bye, and I never caught his glance once, though I watched for it till he had shut the door.

It was at least half-an-hour before Dr. Monkton went away from us to the library — a thing I had known him often do for Gray, but never for me — and I observed, in a somewhat dogged silence, that he did not find it quite easy to maintain the conversation, even although Mrs. Carey was very willing to laugh and make laugh. There was always plenty to say between the Doctor and me. He had to teach, or describe, or talk over a book, or explain a hard passage, and our dialogues were earnest enough, yet I perceived in a moment he had more interest in keeping up one from which he derived no entertainment. If ours languished, away he went; but here he spent all his pains in finding fuel for what was often half extinct.

"Oh, oh, Doctor," said I to myself, "where are all your fine lessons about the unimportance of beauty. Is it altogether her intellectual conversation which delights you?" I pretended to believe myself quite unnecessary, and stood by in silence looking over the index of a book.

At last, however, he went away, and then Mrs. Carey was left entirely to me. Now the jealous feelings which Gray's devotion to her had excited, and the perverse ones which I had just been indulging in at her and Dr. Monkton, had been silent thoughts; I should have

been much worse than I actually was, had they gone so far as words. As it was, when I came to act and speak, things were pretty much with me as if no such feelings had been passing to and fro in my mind; and I came to the task of entertaining her with just as much humility and zeal as though I had no jealousy or mortification at heart. I offered to show her the gardens, but she said the sun was hot, and she was easily tired; I opened drawers of shells and coins, but she did not even affect the smallest interest in them. All the time she was willing to be amused, if I could hit on the right plan, so I tried again and again. She tried also; making some inquiries into my memoirs, such as whether I went to London, what family my uncle had, and the domestic prospects of the poultry-yard; but neither on these nor any other subjects did I possess the talent of making interesting answers.

Mrs. Carey gaped, and I changed our relative ground as quickly as possible, and began proposing inquiries to her. The difficulty was, as I knew very well by experience, to find out that subject, or those subjects, upon which the person questioned finds any amusement in answering; and this depends so much upon who the questioner is, that the style which succeeds with one person does not do at all for another. Knowing this, I looked about a long time before I discovered the right one. Dress — that was rather interesting. Whatever a person has of the first excellence, and can speak of with authority, must always be interesting to them. Neighbours — a most fertile subject; but, unhappily, I only knew one family, and not much of them; and I own — though, as far as they went, they were very useful — I grew ashamed of coming back from so many

points of discourse to Mr. Smitton's white silk stockings; Mrs. Smitton's face, like a double violet; Miss Smitton's manner of pronouncing *de granne cur;* and Mr. Edward Smitton and Mr. Alfred Smitton's manner of pronouncing nothing at all. Beauty, offers, conquests, that was the prime subject. To inquire from her what beautiful people did and felt; to assume that she could give me full information on the various styles of flattery; to appeal to her as authority upon the subject of female triumph and pride — was to acknowledge her beautiful and victorious, and, at the same time, to do all justice to the extreme humility of my own pretensions. She was flattered, interested, and put into good humour with me; and though I found it rather tiresome, I carried on the subject, when I had laid hold of it, with great fortitude, too much elated by success to let it go again directly.

At length, about noon, when the day was at the hottest, Mrs. Carey surprised me for a moment by proposing to ride, though she had refused all exercise two hours ago, on account of the heat; and I was going to say, "Is not it hotter than it was?" but that was so perfectly obvious that it was impossible but what a lady of her observation should be aware of the fact; and, therefore, comprehending that she had some other view, I merely assented.

"Where should we go?" I said, when we were crossing the hall to mount.

"Oh, just where you like," she said. I must show her some of the beauty of the neighbourhood. I thought this a natural zeal for the picturesque, and proposed a valley, and a church and village, celebrated for their merits.

Mrs. Carey said, "Yes; only would not it be very hot in the valley?" I gave up, and asked if she would like to ride along the river. There were limes for a mile and more, and a broad green path under them along the banks.

"Very well," she said. Only she knew the river so well by her own house.

"That's true," said I, a little perplexed. "Where *shall* we go?"

"Suppose we go to meet the sportsmen," said Mrs. Carey. "Your brother said they should be at Bearley Farm — is not it? — about one o'clock."

"Oh, very well," said I. "Exactly. Yes, that will be very pleasant."

We rode, accordingly, along the turnpike-road for a couple of miles, and then turned off across four flat meadows. It certainly was not the very prettiest part of Buckwell; but it brought us to Bearley Farm, and there we found Mr. Carey and Gray. The latter, at all events, expected us, and the farmer had been warned to prepare the best of rustic fare in his "cool parlour stuck with lavender."

Here we dismounted, and at least *I* was relieved from all trouble in entertaining her, which, after all, was only natural, as I said to myself at the time; yet I watched Gray's face and manner, and was best pleased of all that morning when I saw him make as much motion as he civilly could to join the rest of the party after the *tête-à-tête* in which she engaged him at the open window had lasted some time.

Things went on at this visit much as is usual on such occasions. The farmer sat with us at luncheon; and his wife, if sometimes prevailed to sit a moment,

started suddenly up and out of the room for more good things to replenish or augment our repast. Mr. Carey and Gray talked with our host of partridges and wheat. He grew happy, and earnestly pressed Mrs. Carey to drink wine, and more wine.

"But why?" said she, laughing, and guarding her glass.

"Oh, we always tell Miss Aikin what, Sir Gray, you said that night of the ball. 'Come, Miss Aikin,' said Sir Gray, 'that beautiful fine colour deserves Benjamin's mess.'"

This sally made us laugh, and heightened a little the radiant complexion to which it was addressed.

"Please to let me help you too, Miss Katherine," said the farmer. "Handsome is as handsome does, you know, miss; and that's always a comfort."

Again we laughed, and I did so almost with more good will than the rest; but Gray was half vexed, Mr. Carey a little disconcerted, and his wife glanced at him, as much as to say, "She will be in a pet."

"Katherine, dear," said Gray, "come and pour shot into my belt."

I jumped up, and, while I was doing it, Gray, with a half caress, whispered, "You are a famous child to manage for one; you are a perfect child. Were you tired this morning? Did you get on well?"

I answered him in as low a voice. I made my voice lower than was necessary, because I liked to feel there were things to say to him, and a way of saying them, to which nobody had a right but me. I was pleased that the visit ended in this way, and that I had recovered, as it were, my place in Gray's confidence;

and when at last we rode home, I liked Mrs. Carey better than I had yet done.

The day after this, was hotter than ever; but Mrs. Carey thought it would do very well to see the gardens and conservatory, for nobody went to shoot, and she had a more amusing conductor than I.

"I am going to write letters, Gray," said Mr. Carey, after breakfast. "I am not coming with you."

"Caro, what are you going to write about?" said his wife, sitting down before him, and laying her two hands on his arm. He smiled, and answered her with some hard technical words, which he knew would silence her at once.

"Oh, don't tell me any more," said she, putting her fingers to her ears. "I did not think you were going to commit accounts, or I would not have come near you. Come, Sir Gray, let me escape him till his mind settles again." And, affecting this horror, she still passed close by him, and slid her hand into his, implying, "Think of me." However, she made Gray believe she was thinking of nothing but him.

Mr. Carey, as I divined, was so absolutely certain that she loved him yet more than he loved her, and that she was secretly — even secretly to herself — made anxious by this to gain something and lose nothing in his affections, that it never entered his head she had any object with other people than to secure a due share of admiration. Nor, indeed, had she. And as to any consequences to them which might ensue from her coquetry, the subject never occurred to her.

She took a very long walk with Gray. Neither of them seemed to think of coming back. After I had anxiously consulted with the cook, and looked at my

gown, I went into the drawing-room, thinking she would, even before I got there, be returned, as she had professed to be so easily tired, and spent my time as one does out of one's own ordinary room, in running my fingers through my hair, and reading the newspaper wrong way and right way. It was of no use to set about any regular employment when one was sure to be so soon disturbed. Besides, I was thinking of Gray. In this way an hour passed, after I had supposed I should not have a minute to kill. I had a mind to join them; but perhaps they did not want me. I thought of Dr. Monkton, whose library hours were nearly over, and then he was always glad to have me to lecture. I must have been a little restless, for I determined to go voluntarily to him. But as I was resolving so to do, he himself came in.

"Hey, Katherine! are you all alone?" said he. "Where's Mrs. Carey?"

"What! you did not come to look for me," said I; "I was better disposed towards *you*, for I was just coming in search of you."

"Very much obliged, Katherine; what can I do for you?"

"I thought you would read with me a little. It is just the time you are generally disengaged."

"But it is such a fine day," said Dr. Monkton, "I thought we might all take a walk somewhere or other."

"A walk! you don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do; when there are strangers in the house, one must sacrifice a little to them, and Mrs. Carey, perhaps, will be tired without some little amusement. Go, and ask her."

"She has thought of it before you; she has been walking with Gray ever since breakfast."

Dr. Monkton contracted his lips into a chirrup; after a moment, he said, "Where are they gone? It would be very civil if we joined them. Get your bonnet, and let us go." But he had so often defeated my hopes of out-door enterprizes, that I would not second his.

"No, no!" said I, "they will do very well; and I know you don't like walking. Let us get Locke, and read here until they come in. We will sit by the window, shall we?" But I saw a shade of something like embarrassment come into my Doctor's face, and I repented most heartily of bringing it. "Yet, perhaps, we *had* better go," said I; "it *would* be kind after all." And I was going into the hall for my bonnet, when we heard voices approaching the house.

"No, here they come," said Dr. Monkton; "that's all very well; so we shall be saved the trouble."

Accordingly, they came slowly up the green walk in front of the windows, talking in the most earnest and confidential way, just as if they had all the secrets in the world to tell. Whether Mrs. Carey's communications were quite so weighty as she made them appear, was not certain, for I observed that when they came near enough to be heard, though she had not changed her earnest attitude, she was repeating words that are like attorneys' flourishes, good only to lengthen the line: such as, "Therefore, you see it is so," and "on that account, as I was saying, it is better," "you know," "is not it, yes — exactly." There was no affectation of absorbed attention in Gray. It was perfectly real; though he, too, seemed at the end of discourse. When they came close, she raised her eyes suddenly, returning, as it were, to other people.

"You were deep in conversation," said Dr. Monkton.

"Were we? Oh, yes, so we were."

"So you were *not*," thought I; "can't this wise Doctor see any further than that?"

Meantime Mrs. Carey's eyes had ascertained that her husband was not in the room. "Where's Lucius?" she said; "I want to say a word to him before he goes out."

"He is gone," said Dr. Monkton; "he finished his letters, and said he would ride over to Holkeden to see the Adairs."

"Gone!" said she, quickly. "Did not he want me? He asked for me, I'm afraid?

"No, I think not," said Dr. Monkton.

"Oh," said Mrs. Carey, not with pique but in a gentle tone of dejection; "I thought, perhaps, he had."

She looked like a child who says, "Now, you've spoiled all my happiness; you must play by yourselves now, I won't play with you any more." I daresay all the time she had been approaching the house she had intended to walk and talk with Mr. Carey, and she was disappointed; after a long confidential conversation with any of her suite, she always seemed desirous to assure herself that her husband knew she preferred his society to the whole world, and she would take pains to secure it, though, in every other instance, it was others who took pains for hers. She said nothing of this, but it was not hard to understand, at least to a silent spectator of her own sex; and, perhaps, Dr. Monkton guessed partly the state of the case. Gray neither knew his own feelings nor hers; and on the present occasion he only thought she was tired by her walk, as she said, and, perhaps, as she thought, she was; and when she lay down on the sofa, and enjoined none to speak to

her, he looked as much concerned as if she had been really ill.

My dear Gray, how easily men are taken in! Gray accordingly drew one curtain, put back another — opened this window — shut it again — brought cushions — placed footstools, and Mrs. Carey grew worse and worse for every remedy. She was very grateful for them, bade him give himself no trouble — begged him not to be so very goodnatured, and thought herself really ill, and really obliged; till, by degrees, she began to grow pleased with herself and the world again, through the flattering anxiety and concern of her young and sincere adorer, and allowed herself, at last, to be now comfortable, and upon the point of recovery.

"Now, go on in your own way," said she, drawing a shawl round her beautiful shoulders, and settling herself upon the cushions. "Don't mind me, I shall listen while you talk; it will be the best thing in the world for me."

This is a hard injunction; as to going on in one's own way, under the eyes and ears of a listening stranger, you may just as well expect a learner in a foreign language to declare his sentiments freely to the man who will correct his bad grammar. "Nonsense," said I to myself, "she can talk as well as any of us." However, to please Gray, I did my best, taxing my brain for some subject which should put her into conceit with herself, and, consequently, with her associates. It was a matter of difficulty to find this, but I succeeded at last, and then only it was that she recovered her health, and finally became well enough to take a drive before dinner.

The next day, and the next, still went on in this

way. Mrs. Carey was pleased with the admiration she excited, and could not think of allowing it to become less. Gray was fascinated, and never doubted that he did anything more than admire a very beautiful guest, the wife of his friend. He looked so happy and seemed so well pleased when he was laughing and talking with her, that I reproached myself for not being attractive and delightful like her — for being so inferior a companion. She had her place by his side, her merry graceful words on purpose for him; she was very pleased and joyous also, and unconscious that she was trifling. They were young; formed to be gay and happy — and gay and happy they were; and I, who was a spectator, watched anxiously without well knowing what I was afraid of.

One day it so happened that there was to be cub-hunting close to Buckwell, the hounds were to draw a covert just outside the park at five in the morning; and at night, when it was being talked over, Mrs. Carey said she must see it. She understood that I had often gone out with Gray at that hour; and whatever achievement gave occasion for any one else to be talked of, she would always undertake and excel their performance, if possible. She heard Gray describe the "great blobs of dew," the "shadows which came from the east instead of the west;" she was eager to see it all, and Gray was transported to think of showing it to her.

"Caro, say if it won't be delightful!" she said to her husband, kneeling down and laying her hands on his arm, Gray having left the room.

"Perfectly so, in anticipation," answered he; "only I think you will repent when it is to be put into execution."

"Oh, it will not tire me in the least," said Mrs. Carey; "and if it does it will be no worse than a ball at night instead of a ride early in the morning.

"I did not mean the fatigue, fairest Margeret," said Mr. Carey.

"What then, dear?" said she, in a sudden tone of alarm; but her mind was set on the project, and, finding him silent, she went on with it. "It is merely a few dogs, and the old huntsman, you know, Lucius, and a canter of two or three miles, and then breakfast, all just as usual; that's all right, is not it, Lucius?"

He smiled and said, "Quite right;" and she, being desirous to think him in earnest, took him for such, at least for the present, though I would have ventured all my store of worldly goods that she would not let the matter rest finally till she had convinced herself thoroughly of his real opinion, and given up her own to it — and this he also probably knew perfectly well. We all separated, however, at eleven o'clock, with the project just where it was, Gray giving orders for the horses to be ready by a quarter before five. He himself was up, I think, nearly an hour before the time. The morning was heavenly fair, holy and calm like a temple; I came to him by half-past four, and began to fear, as much as he continued to believe, that Mrs. Carey would join us after all. The minutes went on; the horses were about to come round.

"Take some more coffee, Katherine," said he, speaking with glee and excitement; "was there ever such a lucky morning."

"So it is, but you are a lucky man always."

"Hey?" said Gray, with a half sigh, "I don't know that; I wish..... but is she coming, do you think?"

"It is hardly time, is it?"

"Passed," said Gray; "well, one comfort is, she is quite sure to come at last. It is not like going in search of the somebody you want to accompany you. You are sure to miss *them* — but she is here; actually here in the house."

"It will be late, though," said I, rather displeased at this certainty.

"No matter, we shall find them somewhere," said Gray. "I wish she would come, though," said he, after a minute's pause, "we have so much less time to ride, every minute she delays."

"Perhaps she will be afraid of the weather," said I, walking to the window.

"Weather!" cried Gray; "what can you mean, Katherine?"

"Or they have forgotten to call her."

"Oh, certainly not; for I sent them to the door myself."

"Well, I don't know what can be the matter," said I, complacently, for I began to feel sure she would not come at all.

"Nor I," cried Gray, walking up and down, then stopping to listen.

"I suppose you can't wait," said I.

"Stay, here she is," cried Gray, springing towards the door.

"Nay, never!" said I, under my breath.

In walked her maid as Gray flung open the door. "My mistress says she is sorry, but she shan't be able to come this morning," said the Abigail, who was very angry at being made to rise so early. "She is not quite well."

Gray's countenance fell. "Then I shall not go either," said he, pettishly, when the maid closed the door, "unless, indeed, Katherine, you particularly wish it. I'll go with you if you please."

"No, indeed, I don't care about it; never mind me; but won't they expect you?"

"They must expect, then," said Gray, sitting down, and kicking his hat out of his way. "Ring the bell, Katherine, and we will send away the horses; and take off your riding habit, and let us stay at home, then."

I did all he bade me without further discussion, and returned to him so soon as I had got on my ordinary dress. It was but little after five even now, and we had many spare hours before breakfast without anything particular to occupy them. We went out into the delicious morning and walked through our usual haunts. We visited labourers at their early work, young colts, new plantations; the gardener whom we met took us to see the dark, stinking mushroom houses, and the gamekeeper led us to the kennel where six fat young pointer puppies were blindly wheezing and creaking over their dejected, lean-looking mother. All these sights were undeniably interesting, but Gray did not take his usual pleasure in them. After the first feeling of vexation, he was no longer, indeed, angry, but he intended to be in better spirits than he really was.

It was a very hot day, and the sun grew too powerful to be endured for mere laziness; we had been walking a long time already, so we returned to Gray's room, and there, with the light shaded and the air admitted, prepared to pass the time before breakfast. Gray threw himself on a sofa, and took a book in his hand. I had a basket of flowers to put into a great vase. I set the

vase on the ground near him, and kneeled down, leaving him quiet, to talk or read his dull book just as he liked, for I observed he had taken the first near him, and that it was not on any very interesting subject. But he took a course of his own, for he fell asleep — he had been in bed hardly at all, I believe, the night before; we had been walking for three hours, and the morning was very hot.

When I looked up from my employment, after a long silence, I perceived that he had closed his eyes and was sleeping. I gave up the flowers and looked earnestly at him. I would not have disturbed him on any account, and when I remembered that I was kneeling bolt upright, and that it tired me, I only leaned back like a Persian in a picture, and joined my two hands between my knees, for the better assistance, and the expression of the feelings which the sight of him thus sleeping and unconscious excited. To think that *she* may ever disturb that noble heart, cloud that open, kind face!

"There is a shade of trouble in it now," thought I, looking at the face before me in the unconsciousness and undisguisedness of sleep. "Why did she ever come here, and we all so happy till she came — so safe? Oh! if ever there should be the least thought of wrong in him, how miserable he would be! and at present he does not know that there is one fear of it. Oh! my beautiful Gray, my noble Gray, how I wish I were a thought to come into your heart and say just a word! I would not care to die, Gray, if I could do that, and be peace or safety to you, my own dear, dear Gray!"

I was going on after this fashion as good as alone (inasmuch as he was asleep), and yet under the influence of the actual presence of the object of my thoughts, so

that I gave free way to the earnest looks and attitude which the feelings suggested; when Gray suddenly awoke, and, though I changed my position, unclasped my hands, and grew commonplace in a moment, yet the glance of the eye is quicker still, and he had seen me before I altered.

"Katherine," said he, "what are you doing — saying your prayers?"

"They were for you, if I was," said I.

"For me? thank you, then," answered Gray; "and indeed, Katherine, I never saw you, nor any one, so earnest about something; what was it? Tell me."

"I was looking at you, that was all."

"You meant me a great deal of good-will, I'm sure," said Gray. "It was a good eye upon me, and more influential than any evil one, I'll be bound."

"Oh, it ought to be, because I love you, Gray." After arriving at this pitch I altered my tone, because these heroics did not do at all, "That is to say, a very little indeed," and I came up to the sofa and sat down beside him, hiding my face upon his shoulder.

"Good little Katherine!" said Gray, caressingly, "we two have some regard for each other, have not we?"

"Oh! more than anybody else in the world," said I.

"Yes, I suppose so," said Gray, after a moment's pause, for he could not help feeling that I was alluding to something, and thinking of something more than I said; "though other people are very civil and specious at the least, are not they?"

"Oh, and very kind, really. Like Mr. Carey, for instance," said I.

"Yes, and Mrs. Carey," said Gray.

"Why — perhaps so."

"Perhaps? Is not she pleased here, do you think — is anything disagreeable to her — don't you believe she likes to be here?"

"Oh, yes! I do indeed; but you were talking of liking *people*, not *places*."

"Well?" said Gray, in the tone of one who means to say what he cares about, just as if he did not care, and was jesting. "Does not she like *me?*"

"Oh! mightily, of course," said I, in the same tone; "she does not believe there is such another young man in the world."

"She has excellent taste," said Gray; "but really, Katherine, don't you think she does like us?"

"Indeed, Gray, I don't think she does very much; not better than she has done, and will do, as many agreeable people as she meets." And though both of us talked in the plural, each knew it was he only whom we meant.

"Why do you say that? What reason is there for that? It is mere prejudice, on account of her graceful, open manner."

"Oh, no indeed, not prejudice. It *is* a pretty manner, only she never seems to me really concerned in anything we show her or do for her."

"You are wrong, Katherine, in my opinion. She is interested delightfully in all I like to interest a person. Did she talk much about my plan for the village?"

"No, Gray."

"But she asked me to read it, you know."

"Yes, but I don't think she mentioned it. Perhaps it was not a sort of thing to interest her." Gray looked mortified, but laughed, and said No, and then went on.

"At all events she is very easily amused. Why all yesterday, what entertainment was there for her but dining, walking, and riding with me; yet I don't think she was tired."

"No; I dare say. She had nothing to say to me, so I can't judge. She would not hear of going to the Ruin, nor of the boat, nor of riding together; she would go alone with you — and yet....."

"Yet what?" said Gray, smiling, in spite of himself, as I asked all this.

"Yet she had rather have had a word from Mr. Carey."

"Of course," said Gray, half rising, and half angry, "I am not going to compare myself with him in her good opinion. You don't know what you are saying, Katherine. Of course she thinks best of her husband."

"Yes, Gray, quite of course; only then why should she make other people fancy that it is them she prefers?"

"She does not," said Gray.

"Unless they reflect upon it, she does," said I.

Gray answered nothing, but lay meditating and frowning for two or three minutes. He was evidently considering something he had not considered before, and which he could not deny, though he was not pleased at it. He seemed to wish to overthrow his own conclusion, and not to be able. He was going to speak once, and stopped again. At last he got up, and in a very loud, shrill whistle, began the sentimental air of

"Away we all trotted together."

He finished that at the window, whistling as energetically

as if he had done it for money, yet he did not know he was whistling at all, I think, till he came to the end, and recollected himself. Then he returned to the table, where I was again arranging the flowers, not observing him as far as he could see, and said the vase was a pretty shape, and copied from one found at Herculaneum, to which declaration I assented, and he went out of the room.

I could scarcely tell whether my suggestion had any effect or not. I was careful, at all events, that he should not see I remembered giving him any advice, and hoped the more on that account that he would follow it. He never hinted at the subject again to me, and yet, without being able to tell why, I was more at ease during the two days that remained of Mrs. Carey's visit than I had been before. No stranger could possibly have detected the slightest change in his manner towards her, yet there was something which I could feel, though I could not define; something which I knew answered best to her own feeling. It was not earnest, it was playing at being in earnest.

The day, however, that Mr. and Mrs. Carey left us was rather a gloomy one. The sudden change from excitement to repose was uncomfortable, and it was plain to me that Gray was in want of the occupation which her constant demand on his attention had given him. However she was gone; and I had no doubt was half forgetful already, in the pleasure of driving with Mr. Carey, of Gray of Buckwell, and of all that had passed. They went early, and there was all the day before us to spend without them. Dr. Monkton said he should drive home and consult his housekeeper upon the ordering in of sugar and candles. Gray had first a mind to ride,

then to stay at home and write letters, then to shoot; and in all these projects I offered to join to him. At length we determined on the last; and more listlessly than usual, he set out, and I by his side, towards a wood at the distance of a mile or two. I was delighted to find myself so situated again; I did not want anybody to take my place; but I was careful not to say as much, and contented myself with enjoying.

"It will rain," said Gray, looking up in the clouds. "It is an uncomfortable day."

"I don't think it will," said I, seeing more of blue sky than he did. "It will be warmer presently; the sun is coming out."

"It is just two years ago since we began housekeeping," said Gray; "I wish I could see this day twelvemonth, and know what we shall both be doing."

"I can guess; just what we are doing now; what should change us?"

"Nothing, to be sure. Except that things never stand still long together. In the most monotonous life there is a sudden turning over of the leaf; to-day one expects to go on for ever just the same, and to-morrow it is all altered."

"Why, then, I wish to-morrow would not come; I am contented with to-day."

We went on in silence a little way. It was a misty autumnal day, and our path lay up a brook, which came along the bottom of a narrow valley, the sides of which were covered with wood; the brook leaped over the little ledges of rock which composed its bed, and the red berries of the briony hung in garlands over it. At a little distance up this dingle was a cleared space, where in a former fall charcoal had been burned, and

which still remained a round, black, dry spot among the underwood. This bare circle stood at the top of a bank, and beneath it a footpath wound down the side of the dell, at the top of which we were now standing. Just below us, and at the foot of this little hill, there appeared as we came to the top a party of wandering artisans, tinkers and chairmenders, as appeared by the materials loaded on the backs of the two donkeys which composed part of their train.

"This path ought to be stopped," said Gray; "they all steal wood as they walk along, as a matter of course."

"But they ornament the place to the amount of the damage done," said I, looking at the bare black locks of the children, the lean dog, the group made by ragged men and women, the projecting burthens of the donkeys. One of the latter, however, soon attracted a different kind of notice. He was a weak beast, almost hidden under his load, and seemed to be making useless efforts to climb the steep ascent after his comrade, which had soon, with all the company but one, gained half the height of the hill. The man who drove him urged him on by the most savage blows and curses, and the miserable animal, straining its weak limbs and receiving the blows on its outstretched muscles, was a piteous spectacle indeed.

"Holloa!" cried Gray, "a little pity, friend, would not be out of the way."

The man looked up, saw us, and began hoping for a shilling directly. "Lord, your honour, he is the laziest beast — it's all his cunning — I am the pitifullest master to dumb things that ever was seen."

"It's well that his own opinion can't be asked," said Gray.

"It's a desperate hot day," said the gipsy, not attending to this remark, "and hard work getting this cross creature up the hill; but if I had the price of only half a pint of ale at the top, I would not hurry him."

"I'll not pay you for sparing him," said Gray. "Spare him because he is your own beast."

"May the flesh of me fall off my own bones, if I do!" cried the man, and in a great passion he fell upon the animal, cudgelling him, while he bit his own under lip for fury.

Now Gray grew angry also. "Hold! I tell you, I won't see such cruelty. The animal cannot stir."

Again the man paused, but it was out of habitual deference to anybody possessing rank and money, and not from any decrease of anger: the passion was obliged to vent itself by some means, so he began bemoaning himself, and wishing first himself dead, and then the poor donkey; and then cried out to Gray to shoot it. "Shoot it, sir, through the head. I wish it were dead, and a hundred feet under the ground; shoot it, I say, and I'll carry the load myself."

"Say it again," said Gray, "and I will."

"I tell you do, then," cried the man, "and I wish it had been done a year ago, before ever I wasted thistles on it."

"Stand out of the way, then," said Gray, levelling his gun.

"Holloa, what then! hey!" said the man, not intending to be taken at his word, but retreating.

Gray drew the trigger, and shot it dead in a moment.

It was a foolish thing, but so it was, and he said to me, "I don't repent at all of it. If he did not mean to be taken at his word, what did he speak for?"

Meantime, there was such a hurly raised by the gipsy, and the noise of the gun was so striking, that all the horde came running back to see what was the matter. Our attention was caught by them at first, but looking at the fallen hero of the fray again, there appeared tumbling their way out of his panniers first one pheasant, then another pheasant, victims of the poaching gipsy, who, when he saw them, began to lay aside his rage, and tried to kick them among the fern. But Gray had seen them too certainly, and down the bank he rushed to seize his lawful prey. The lord of the fallen donkey took up a stone, and aimed it so truly, that he hit him a blow upon his head, which staggered and nearly brought him to the ground. He recovered his footing, however, and darted on. His gun was too formidable a weapon to be withstood, and after another volley of missiles, the gipsies, male and female, fled up the steep side of the opposite bank, and left all the prey in the hands of the victor. Gray was delighted with success, eager to pursue and punish the poachers, and the hurt he had received from the stone passed unregarded. He would not feel it; he would not acknowledge that he was injured by it; and persevered till he had secured the gipsy, and had him safe under the custody of the gamekeeper.

Dr. Monkton came back and heard the whole adventure with great glee, but not a word was said of the blow; and yet his practised eye could not but detect there was something wrong. He questioned, and, as far as I knew, I told him what was the matter; then he

grew uneasy, but Gray still persisted in being well, and at last — at the end of twenty-four hours' struggle — sank subdued; he lost consciousness and self-control, and was at the very brink of the grave, even when he was persuading me that nothing ailed him. Horrible days! The first fear, the first near view of the frail tenure of life! the terror and the danger endured as long as the external causes were in operation! The dreadful question was, whether they or the vigour of his constitution could longest hold out, and nobody denied for a moment that the evil symptoms might acquire new force, and subdue the powers of life at once.

During this period of suspended volition, the ideas which floated chiefly through his mind made themselves words. He had a faint idea that he was dying, and the thought came with it of me, who should stay behind. I was in almost all his thoughts, and yet, though I was close to him night and day, he believed I was absent. He almost broke my heart by conjuring me to send Katherine to him, by asking why she would not come, and by saying he had done her great unkindness and had left her penniless in the world, and it was for that reason she was absent. "Tell her to come to me only once," said he; "I want to see her before I go; I have been very cruel to her, and she forsakes me. Oh, why does not she come once before I go?"

They said that if he should sleep and then wake composed, all would be well; but if this delirium went off without sleep, the return of reason would be a sign of death. How fearful it was to watch his delirious words, and in the midst of the dread they inspired, fear to hear them turn into reason, to be terrified at the possibility that he should pronounce in love and calmness

my name, yet the frenzy of the fever was equally fearful. It lasted unabated to all outward appearance, but at last there was a change in the current of his ideas, and that, perhaps, indicated some in the disorder. The notion possessed him that death was near, but that he was not permitted to die until he had accomplished some act which he made the efforts of a dreaming man to execute. The will was vigorous, but he seemed to himself restrained from action. He besought assistance, that when the thing desired should be done, he might at last rest; the sense of extreme fatigue seemed to possess him, and the notion of the tomb was like that of a bed, promising cool and deep slumber. But this something to do prevented him from enjoying it. Dr. Monkton thought that if he could imagine himself to have executed what he wished, it was possible that his mind might suspend its activity, and that he might sleep. He therefore encouraged, by every means in his power, the fancied execution, and, at every suggestion of Gray, followed and humoured his wild dreamings.

"I must write it, you know," said Gray, making, however, no effort to lift his hand in the act of writing.

"Yes, yes; I am writing it, and you will sign," said Dr. Monkton. "See, it is ready."

"Is it? Well, then, make it fast. It is poor Katherine's only chance, you know."

"Yes, her only chance."

"If I could but make her secure they all say I might die, and it is that which makes me seem so ill; though, in fact, I'm not ill, only weary."

"Thank God!" said Dr. Monkton, softly. "What else shall I write?"

"Write that Katherine is to have all the money. I shall want none, you know, where I am going."

"Well, it's written," said Dr. Monkton; "now you may rest."

"But can you swear it is?"

"I swear by Heaven! by earth..."

"That's well," said Gray. "Then, good-bye." His eyes drooped, yet did not close. We watched breathless and motionless, lest we should disturb the hovering and uncertain sleep. I remember hearing the flight of an insect at that moment across the room, and it sounded to me as startling as the blast of a trumpet. But Gray heard it not. By degrees the eyelids sank quietly down; a calmer expression stole over his face; he slept. We watched him for hours, motionless as himself. He woke at last, and, looking round him, smiled at me, and said, "Katherine, I've been ill, have not I?"

From the time that Gray began to recover he did so rapidly, but something seemed to dwell upon his mind which prevented a still quicker progress. He seemed more anxious about his own state than his bold temper made probable, and he was impatient to have the very day fixed when he might get rid of the restraint considered necessary for recovery. Unlike his usual habits, he would not confide to me the secret feelings which too evidently oppressed him, and if I tried to lead him towards a confidence he would always avoid the subject, or deny that anything went wrong with him. I could only account for all this by supposing that the same idea respecting me, which had haunted him in delirium, continued to give him uneasiness under returning health. I tried to talk on the subject, but he always eluded it,

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and I began to believe had at last overcome the phantasy which haunted him in sickness.

He, however, plainly wished to be alone, and at last took his own way, told Dr. Monkton he must be busy such a day, and desired me to take the opportunity for a walk. I obeyed him; at least I left the room, but when I had my bonnet on, and had walked a hundred yards from the house, I could not bear the fresh air and the wide bright scene, contrasted with the dark room of sickness, and taking patience against the pleasure to which he had condemned me, merely went up and down the terrace which ran under the wall of the house, in a part of which was the window of his room. After I had been there more than half an hour I saw a door open from a side entrance, and a figure steal gently out. I stood still a minute, but the figure turned its head hither and thither, as though it were still more fain to meet with some person or object of its search than to get away unobserved. In the course of these observations it seems that I was perceived, and then changing the reconnoitring attitude hitherto observed, on came the figure to meet me, and I perceived it was Mr. Corn.

"I'm glad we've met, ma'am," said he; "I wished to see you that I might give you joy."

"What, you think him so much better?" said I, concluding he alluded to Gray's recovery.

"Why, I don't know that," answered Mr. Corn, shaking his head, "though I'm sure *I* have every reason to hope it; but the risk, Miss Buckwell, under Sir Gray's circumstances, really is tremendous."

"What risk?" cried I, starting, and ready to fly to the house.

"Oh, not immediate," said Mr. Corn; "better, I trust.

And yet, except a proved friend, like myself, who is there that could advance money for such a purpose, with such a prospect?"

"What, has he been borrowing again? I hoped that was all over."

"Nay, nay, Miss Katherine; why such mystery among friends? I'm as glad as you can be that it is you who are to be benefited by it; and I'm sure, if anything should unfortunately happen to Sir Gray, you'll not forget who it was ..... you know, ma'am ....." And he paused, and looked in my face, to see, probably, what was the extent of my knowledge or my ignorance.

"No, I don't know. I don't want to know, if Gray has any secret."

"Oh, it's just as well you should. You may have your own projects, ma'am, no doubt; and as I was saying, that without my aid it being impossible to raise such a sum, you'll not forget ..... of course, supposing anything should ..... in short ..... now, will you guess how much?"

"No, no; I know nothing about it."

He approached me closely, and, in a short, low voice, throwing his eyes out of the corners at me, he said, "Ten thousand? Humph! what think you of that?"

"What, for me? You don't mean it, I hope?"

"Why, you never, surely, could have expected more? You don't know the value of money, ma'am."

"Oh, he never shall do that. Go back to him, Mr. Corn, be so very kind — you are so well acquainted with business, you can manage it — go back, and make him give up such an idea."

"My dear lady," said Mr. Corn, laughing, "I *am* better acquainted with business than that. I don't ex-

actly, indeed, understand your view of the case; but some future day, when I shall have the pleasure of putting this paper into your hands, I am quite certain *you* will understand mine."

So saying, he showed me a document, flourished over with law-terms, but in which he pointed out such words as "Katherine, commonly called Katherine Buckwell," and "in case of the death of Sir Gray Buckwell, Bart.;" and next, a set of letters spelling forth ten thousand pounds. I did not want to see so much, for it was like looking at a secret of Gray's; and although Mr. Corn steadily prohibited me from speaking on the subject to my brother, I gave him no such assurance, and, the moment I got rid of him, ran straight to Gray, and remonstrated. I knew he could only obtain such an arrangement by some very large sacrifice, and I was bent on nothing so much as changing his purpose.

But he would not hear me. He said, granting even that he did make a sacrifice, it was one to his own ease. "I would not hazard seeing such a spectre again, Katherine, as I saw in my crazy state for ten times ten thousand. There was your piteous face, as pale as a sheet, and you were in threadbare black, and did not hear me, though I tried to call you. Do you know, Katherine, I could see through your thin hands, and you were sitting alone, in some great town, with nothing on the table but a tallow candle in a tin candlestick."

Gray would hear no more, and explain no more. He gave himself up joyfully now to getting well, and said there was nothing to hinder him unless I thwarted him upon his pet scheme. I was not accustomed to resist him, and could do no more. By the accidental discovery of his secret I was restored to his full confidence, and

during his recovery was his constant companion, and the only one from whom he would ask the little services of an invalid. But, indeed, they soon ceased to be necessary, for his health returned quicker than the rules of art could allow possible; and while Dr. Monkton was still prescribing precautions and potions, he had resumed his old habits, and had forgotten and ceased to feel that he had been ill.

Among the amusements of his convalescence, while he was yet not strong enough to undertake long walks, was one in which I often shared as spectator. This was shooting at a mark, which mark was placed on the door of a barn, at no great distance from the road, so that our diversion was within sight, though out of the way of passengers. It was in this amusement that we were one day engaged, when there came up towards us a woman comelily habited in black silk, long mittens on her arms, and a fresh and rosy face withal, and hearty gait and air, in whom we recognised the widow of one of the tenants who had succeeded to her husband's farm, his wealth, and cares.

"Good me, Sir Gray!" said she, when she came up with us; "is it you are *bosting* away at this rate? Why, they told me I was to find you on your back, all under the doctor's hands still."

"Not I," said Gray; "I am as well as ever I was in my life. You will be disappointed of the funeral show this time, Mrs. Sollars."

"For shame, Sir Gray!" said the widow. "It is not providential to talk in that way. There's no knowing who's standing by to take you at your word."

"But my word is to live," said Gray. "I only said there was no funeral cake for the village yet."

"Better not jest over such bitter bread," said the dame. "But, in real earnest, I'm glad to see you so come about, sir, though you do look a little prettier than becomes a young man and gentleman; but you'll soon overget that."

Gray laughed. "If prettiness go by paleness, I shall, there's no doubt. But that can't be the meaning of pretty, when I see you so blooming, Mrs. Sollars."

"Oh, Sir Gray," said the comely widow, charmed at the compliment, "poor William used to like to see me a little hearty. But I have done thinking of such things now. There's no saying where the most beautiful and the best of us are hastening." With this she put on a very good look, and partly in sincerity, partly in hypocrisy, gave a great sigh.

"Hastening to dine, in the first place," said Gray. "There's the hall-bell, and the house-keeper will be delighted to see you; and after dinner you must tell me about the barn-floor and the parlour-ceiling, for I know that's what you're come for."

"It's very true, Sir Gray, that they are in need of mending; so are we all — all in need of a stitch; and it's best taken in time, for nobody can tell how near their end is at hand."

"And how does the dairy get on?" said Gray. "How many calves are you going to rear this year?"

"There's nothing amiss in it, Sir Gray," said the farmeress, who was famous as a dairywoman. "I have the factor coming round already to bespeak the cheeses, though he gives me twopence a pound more than my neighbours; and Blossom has a calf as handsome very near as herself was at the little one's age — though

there's no saying," she added, dropping her voice, "what may cut off a blossom before it come to be a cow."

"Why, Mrs. Sollars," said Gray, laughing aloud, "I never heard you so instructive in my life. Where can you have been to get so much good learning?"

"Nay, I've been nowhere," said she; "only the scenes of mortality about make one to calculate. To think of *you*, now, so young, and our landlord, too, within an inch of being pushed off the perch!"

"Ay," said Gray, "and if I had lost hold of the perch, as you say, my lease to you would have been as good as nothing."

"Ah, hem!" said the dame, giving a great clearing to her voice, as if she had reached the object of all her discourse.

"Oh, *that's* it, is it?" said Gray. "That is the cause of all your sober sentences and long faces. But what can I do further in the matter? I can't promise to live purely to oblige you."

"That's not to be expected, sir," said Mrs. Sollars; "but you can speak a word to them as comes after you."

Gray coloured a little, as though the good woman's selfishness were a little too harsh; but in a moment or two he said, without any alteration of voice, "There's nothing like prudence in this world, Mrs. Sollars. You're the woman to get on in it, be the other who she may; and though I'm somewhat the younger of the two, yet, no doubt, you will be the one to say, 'Ah, poor young man! if he had but taken my advice!'"

"I'm glad you approve of me, sir," said Mrs. Sollars, looking a little puzzled at the same time; "and though there's not the least question that I shall be churchyard-

clay before you be old man's flesh, yet, for fear of accident, I should like to have your uncle's hand along with yours to the promise; for if we were to lose you it would be sorrow enough, without the lease going too."

"Pshaw!" said Gray. "I like your concern for the lease best, for that's truth; and though I'm the master at present, Mrs. Sollars — though there's nobody *just* yet except myself who is concerned in the property — yet, since you are so thoughtful....." And then Gray paused.

"Nay, I hope I've said nothing to anger you, sir," said Mrs. Sollars. "I spoke for the best, I am sure, and thought no harm; but you quality must make allowance for such as us."

"I angry? Not the least bit in the world," said Gray. "On the contrary, I tell you that you are a careful and a prudent woman; and if you'll go in, I'll come and drink your long life before dinner is over." So saying, he nodded to her as she took her way to the hall, and then, turning his eyes to me, burst out into a laugh, and in a moment after sent the ball through the centre mark. He did not forget the scene, however. His pride was roused, and he would have felt it like a weakness if he had not strictly complied with the good woman's request. "Ay," said he, "just as little as I regard this charge of powder, will anybody regard me when I cease to be of use to them. All fair," he added, carelessly.

"Don't say anybody, Gray."

"No, not you, poor dear child. But you and I are one in the world, you know. I'd be your mourner; so it's fair you should be mine. But nobody else; don't let your ghost expect it. And I assure you, Katherine, it is only to you that mine will come for any good office he may want."

"Alas!" said I, trying to laugh, because I knew that it was his way to speak of these matters thus lightly. But when I looked up at him I could not help my eyes filling with tears.

Gray stooped and kissed me. "Well," said he, "send for my uncle, at all events."

It was arranged before long that old Mr. Buckwell should pay us a visit, without, however, informing him as yet of the particular object, and his son-in-law and granddaughters were to accompany him.

As my uncle said, if it had not been for Gray, he himself would have been eldest son, and in possession of the property; but with regard to him this idea did not give me the disagreeable impression which it did towards Mr. Tasebrook, his son-in-law. He was a man who did not adore the possessor, but who did adore possession, particularly the possession of Buckwell; and all the regard he felt for us, arose exclusively from being the fortunate owners. Now I was not the owner, but I was surrounded, made what I was, by these things; I had no claim of my own, upon which he would found the smallest atom of regard; I was his hostess when he came among us, and an object of consideration solely by that circumstance; and the idea that he should ever change places with me, came in the shape of something much more repugnant than one's own death — it came in that of the death of the one friend I had in the world. It was only Gray's glorious health, and the moral impossibility of any such occurrence, that gave me courage in the presence of Mr. Tasebrook. His daughters were children in manners, though the eldest was nearly as old as I; but their ill education, and the strange habits of their father, made them my inferiors;

even the eldest looked on me as a woman, while I treated her like a child. The youngest, poor little Martha, was in reality a child; she was but nine years old, and would never live to see mature age; she was plainly born merely to die; and the amusements and instructions which for others of her own age had an object beyond childhood, were for her only good to amuse the early morning of life, which would never see noonday. She suffered from complaints which seemed proper to age instead of childhood, and which had given her all the signs of decay in the earliest youth. A sallow skin, swollen stature, decayed teeth; and her cares, poor child, were naturally about her medicines and her gruels, as those of others are for raw apples and stolen sugar. With all this, there was that sweetness of temper which so constantly accompanies the loss of health in childhood, and such ingenuity in the execution of the little works which she was taught for her amusement, as comes from the sedentary habits of sickness and infirmity.

My uncle was passionately attached to this little girl; and he seemed to think all his interests confined to her single life. He could not bear Mr. Tasebrook's philosophy on the subject, which was, indeed, unnecessarily sublime, and had plainly a view to saying sayings, and nothing else.

"Martha," said her father, when we were come to the first evening, and the little girl was sitting on my uncle's knee, twisting a ribbon into a chain; "Martha, now you must go to bed, and take your draught first, and then your powder an hour after. Come!"

"But I must finish the yellow row, papa," said Martha; "I shan't get the chain done in time if I don't work."

"No, poor child," said her father; "whatever you do, you must do quickly."

"Don't hurry her, James," said my uncle.

"It is not I who hurry her," said Mr. Tasebrook, loudly sighing; "it is the irresistible hand which snaps both the golden cord and the cobweb thread."

Martha looked up and smiled, thinking there was something about work, probably about her own, going on.

"Hush! hush! James," cried my uncle; "don't talk of cords and cobwebs, when it's your own child."

"When I sailed along the Mediterranean, and saw the ruins of Megara . . . . . ." said Mr. Tasebrook, beginning in Latin, and then hastily breaking off, as though he recollected our ignorance, and translating into English. "But this is idle talk; we all know what must be, must. Go to bed, Martha. Susan!" The eldest girl, who had been eating toast and butter, came forward at this appeal, and began, with great signs of authority, to put up little Martha's work, and to waddle about with words of admonition. The sick child kissed the old man; the father learnedly felt her pulse, and looked at her tongue, regardless of tea time; and the eldest sister led her off, with those tones and words which belong to an old nursery-maid rather than to a young girl.

I looked at them all silently; thought of Gray, and then of Buckwell, and said, or rather thought to myself, "It never can possibly be!"

The business which brought them to Buckwell was soon explained by Gray. He summoned Mrs. Sollars; in his careless manner told my uncle and his son-in-law, her prudent anticipation, and rose himself into high spirits as Mr. Tasebrook, especially, took it gravely and showed himself shocked by the transaction.

"This is a business," said he, "from which, I trust' Sir Gray, you will believe that my understandiug and inclination revolt. My father-in-law must do as he pleases; propinquity of blood is not authority of station; but I would fain use the former, as a serene coercion to restrain this transaction."

"Do no such thing," said Gray, laughing; "I know it is no wish of yours; but what harm could it do me if it were?"

"The harm," said Mr. Tasebrook, "arises from the association of ideas suggested between the branch of the tree to which I belong and the property which coalesces with the trunk of the tree, which is yourself."

"If you mean," said my uncle, "a connexion between me and the estate of Buckwell, I think it very natural for Mrs. Sollars to reckon upon it. For a long time, you know, my brother had no heir but me; and though, at last, it pleased Providence to send you, Gray, yet I was never far off it, and people can't forget that it is you came after me, not I after you."

"To be sure," said Gray; "the stone had but to go a line higher, and my head to be a whit softer, and you were in my place in a moment."

"A mere accident," said Mr. Tasebrook.

"Ah! nephew," said Mr. Buckwell, "a dreadful thing, indeed; I went to the church the day after they said you were safe, to thank God for it. It was not Sunday, but I went, for my heart was near bursting, and it did me good."

"Thank you, uncle," said Gray.

"So young as you are," said Mr. Buckwell, looking at him, "and so happy as you are to be, no doubt; for my part, I wish we were all happy."

"So do I," cried Gray, "so do I, and I hope you are."

"Oh! nephew, how can you say so?" said Mr. Buckwell, in a tone of peevish reproach. "Am I not behind everybody, after everything; does any good stop for me, but does not rather some more lucky person come in, just in my place?"

"Sir," said Mr. Tasebrook, "it is unworthy the dignity of a reasoning animal to covet that accident which another entity supports."

"Covet accidents!" said I; "that is just what my uncle *does*. If he can get the worst place and the least comfortable chair he is contented."

"I covet nothing," said Mr. Buckwell. "It would be wrong; and, besides, I should not have the comfort of seeing that there are very few so unlucky as I am, and that's a very great consolation."

"If you please, sir," said Mrs. Sollars, who was standing by all this time, much puzzled at what was going on, "I should be the most unlucky woman in the world if I were not to get your promise to make all safe with the young sir."

"You mistake," said Mr. Buckwell; "as I shall die first, mine can do you no good."

"Let us sign, however," said Gray; so saying he took up a pen, and prepared to write his name, but my uncle stopped him.

"No, Gray, it is proper that I should sign first. I was akin to the estate before you were, and you've taken my place, so we will come in our order, the one that is to go out to his ancestors first should stand nighest the head."

"So be it," said Gray, looking over my uncle's

shoulder while he carefully indited his name; then, leaning himself over the table, he jotted down his own below, and handed the paper over to the satisfied Mrs. Sollars.

This transaction half pleased half grieved my uncle. It brought up into action all the unquiet thoughts which his want of possession had ever created within him. At one time he congratulated himself that the house of Buckwell was represented by a male heir, as it had been since the time of the Conqueror; and then he grieved that he should be the unhappy branch of the house to which only females were allotted. Sometimes he was glad that the name of Buckwell was perpetuated in Gray, and sometimes sorry that it should be changed in his own descendants to Tasebrook.

"It is so providential," said he, "that my brother was the eldest of the family. Men may say what they will, but the going out of an old house is like the second death of all that were called by its name. While one of their ownselves is alive, their names are carved again when they wear out on the monuments, and their old avenues and old halls that they planted and took pride in, are held in respect; but a new name has nothing to do but care for itself; and the old one withers away till the dust that was known by it is not held different from the common dust of the earth. But it was not for me to hold up my old name. Dear, dear girls, to think you should be born girls! but we must submit to all things," said he, lifting up his eyes with deep humility.

In fact, at this time the world did really go ill with him. Poor little Martha, his great solace, had a fresh attack of her complaint, and the medical men thought it

would be fatal. I was very sorry for my uncle; he looked on this calamity as a stroke which had never hit any one but him; and regarded the dying child as if she had been one of the earth's best promises.

"She was my child's child; an angel's angel; the last being my own child loved," said he. "You see, Katherine, how everything that others enjoy falls away from me; even the little girl, while I am gray-headed."

He came several times in an hour to the room where I watched the suffering child, and though he had no skill in the management of her sickness, yet his deep anxiety prompted the voice and manner that were most acceptable to her, Mr. Tasebrook had given her up at once; he knew she must die, and he was ready for an event which he had long expected. Yet there was something more lovely and touching in the lingering hope, the unaltered wishes of my uncle, than in the father's reasonable determination. She, too, clung to her grandfather, as though an instinct taught her which of us all it was who would mourn for her; and although the idea of dying seemed to me no more present to her than to the sick bird, or the sick sheep, she felt, without seeing, the approach of death. The day came at last; she became worse, ceased to eat, and suffered from the cold which was soon to be so great without being felt. We tried to relieve her with hot water; putting bottles of it into the bed to revive the vital warmth, and this so soothed her that she fell into the last sleep she was ever to enjoy. We expected her to die sleeping or to awake to die, and my uncle stood by her on one side, I sat on the other, watching the grief of *his* countenance, and the pale, quiet face of the departing child.

Presently she woke, and, for the first time since she

had been so ill, there was a frightened expression in her eyes. She seemed to have some frightful image before her, and to look round on the things which were familiar, as though they did not yet dispel it. I spoke to her, and I could perceive, when I stooped down to catch the words she uttered in reply, that even this unsinning creature had been suffering from phantoms such as may haunt a guilty bed. I thought the warmth applied to her limbs had perhaps caused the disturbed dreams; and, as she was frightened still, proposed to her to hold her in my arms, hoping such a position would suggest the feelings of protection. She assented, and the last efforts of life were made in the movement to seek refuge from the ideas which had terrified her. She looked in my face after I had taken her up with a faint smile expressive of comfort, and then languidly drooped her eyelids half way, and at the same time her head rolled a little on my shoulder.

I felt the blood rush into my face, and looked up at my uncle. He came, and clasping his hands, bent over her, but refrained from words. The nurse was not so quiet — she fell down on her knees, weeping aloud, and calling on the name of her charge, while she mixed her lamentations with holy names and words, which were expressions of her fear and sorrow, rather than prayers. But suddenly she stopped and was perfectly still; for there rose up in the apartment a low and very sweet sound (not a single sound but several harmonizing together), like voices which sang in an unknown language. It was evidently in the room, and not distant from us, but *where* none could tell. "It's the angels, and she's going with them," said the nurse, in the lowest and most awe-stricken tone as it ceased at last. "Is she gone?"

"No!" said I. "Hush!" for she still breathed heavily, and wherever the sound might come from, it was very striking in such a moment.

"They're gone forward, they've told her to come," said the nurse, shaking all over; "pray God we don't hear them again!" But, after a pause, the same long notes stole out of the silence, and breathed over us again for a few seconds. The nurse hid her face, then said, "The father must hear them," and ran out of the room.

My uncle stooped down, and whispered, "Martha, Martha, are you happy?" then looked at me, and said, "Is not it awful?" I felt that indeed it was awful. I saw Mr. Tasebrook enter, with a feeling of relief, but though he made an effort to take his child from my arms, it could not then be. He could only stand by in silence, and while the labouring breath came back at painful intervals, there rose a more distinct strain of the placid sounds, and filled the dismal pauses between the gasps of death. The nurse began again to pray aloud. My uncle joined his hands and rested them on the back of the chair where I sat holding her, whispering one word, "She always *was* an angel." Mr. Tasebrook was standing before, and he yielded his arm to the nurse, who turned and grasped it, nor contradicted her as she muttered to him her awe and her belief. But his eye went restlessly round the room, as though well resolved to fix at last upon the cause. Martha at that time struggled in my arms. He knelt down beside me to support her; there was a deep touch of concern on his face, but while his hands were thus employed he looked at me, and directed my eyes by the motion of his head towards the bed, of which the upper covering had been thrown aside. But I did not attend to him then, for the

last pang was passing over the innocent child, and for a few seconds all of us were gathered together while life fluttered, panted, and then sank into stillness.

"It's all over — she's in Heaven," said my uncle, staggering backward to a chair; the nurse took the body in her arms, laid it on the bed, and rocked backwards and forwards with loud sobs.

"You're a blessed father," said she, looking up to Mr. Tasebrook, "to hear your own child sung away by the angels."

"That's very true," said he, assenting in a tone of voice to satisfy the nurse and my uncle both; then, turning to me, he said under his breath, "Certainly; I acknowledge how properly the poor woman expresses herself; but the noises, Miss Wellbuck, the harmonious sounds, came from the bottles of hot water, of which the corks, you may see, are become loose."

CHAPTER IV.

In due course of time Gray came of age, and his guardian arrived to render up his trust. He had accumulated the savings he wished, and the heir was put into possession of his large income and of a considerable sum of ready money. Thanks and praises ensued, and the connexion between Mr. Mainwaring and Buckwell ceased honourably. But there remained beneath these fair appearances much that was of another complexion. In the first place, the guardian did not spend much money, but he had left what required that a great deal should be spent — dilapidated farm-houses and undrained fields. Then there were the debts, of which he knew

nothing, but of which he ought to have known, incurred by Gray to Mr. Corn. They were a subject which Gray disliked, with all the dislike of a man who seems at ease and is not. And as it was one which he longed to know the worst of, he appointed an interview with Mr. Corn the day after his majority.

Mr. Corn came to Gray's study privately, without ostentation, and brought his bundle of papers in his gig. "I have to congratulate you, Sir Gray, upon the expiration of your tedious minority. Few gentlemen are called upon for so much patience as you."

"Or as you," said Gray. "It is a long time indeed since I first got into your debt."

"Oh, don't mention it," said Mr. Corn. "It has given me a great deal of pleasure to be of any use to you. When it lies in our power, Sir Gray, I always say — Let us accommodate our neighbours."

"Always: provided it be paid for," said Gray.

"Why, considering the inconvenience, that's all fair. And if the loss of interest, and, still more, of opportunities, during all those years were taken into account, together with the different state of funds at this time and the various times when I've had the pleasure of supplying you, it would be surprising that my balance against you should be so low, rather than that you should consider it exorbitant."

"I did not mean that it *was;* I don't even know what it *is*," answered Gray.

"Oh, exactly," said Mr. Corn; "yes, I perfectly understood you. I was quite certain that you were convinced of the friendliness and integrity of my demand."

"In the meantime let us see it," said Gray, holding

out his hand for the bundle which Mr. Corn was lengthily untying.

He still, however, went on with the process; keeping the papers in his own possession as though he thought his manuscripts would be read to more advantage by himself than by anybody else; and as it may be supposed that the array of figures at the end of his account was frightful, he was, perhaps, right in bringing it out with his softened voice and humble manner. Humble as he was, however, he contrived to imply that it was time he should be paid, and he exulted when he heard of the money accumulated by the industry of Mr. Mainwaring.

"Very prudent and intelligent, indeed," said he; "and I am sure, Sir Gray, since it will not be inconvenient to you, I may depend upon your kindness in furnishing me with as much as is agreeable to you of my account in such time as may enable me to avail myself of the advantage — the small advantage — at which I could now lay it out. As to the matter of my friend, Miss Katherine, here," he continued, "that, I presume, goes on as before."

"Sir!" cried Gray, "I have already given you my directions respecting Miss Buckwell."

"I beg pardon, sir," said Mr. Corn; "in fact, I was merely speaking of it upon an occasion like this when business is being settled. I've done, sir. Good morning, Sir Gray. Very good morning, Miss Buckwell."

Whatever Mr. Mainwaring, therefore, had saved, was transferred to the account of the money-lender; but still a considerable sum remained to be paid, besides the security of the large provision Gray had made for me. All this was secret, and the world wondered why Gray did none of the things natural for a man who comes into

possession of a large estate; while his late guardian loudly expressed his surprise and vexation that his advice was not taken about the desirable purchase. But Gray was so impenetrable to him on the subject, that Mr. Mainwaring grew angry, and finally withdrew from all communication with us.

Meantime, Gray was considerably perplexed, and I had no advice to give him, except to relinquish the provision for me, which I entreated as earnestly as I knew how, and he refused with as near an approach to anger as he ever expressed to me.

At last he resolved to take one person into his counsels, and that was Mr. Tasebrook, for he was known to be skilful in the guidance of all by-ways of business.

"Don't you wonder," said Gray, "what is become of all the money Mr. Mainwaring used to boast of having saved?"

"No, I don't wonder about it," said Mr. Tasebrook. "I opine you have spent it."

"I opine so too," said Gray, laughing; "and I'll tell you all about it. I believe it is the way to get more after all."

"How," said Mr. Tasebrook, with an air of genuine surprise and admiration, "have you so precociously discovered the self-multiplying powers of gold?"

"Oh, no," said Gray; "I have discovered nothing but the lending power of old Corn."

"I cognosce," said Mr. Tasebrook. Gray was pleased to see that not a muscle of disapprobation moved in Mr. Tasebrook's face — not a symptom of astonishment. He took it perfectly as a matter of course; and Gray, therefore, proceeded, much at his ease, to declare the whole of his transactions with Mr. Corn.

Mr. Tasebrook scratched the back of his head with his thumb, which threw him into a most indifferent attitude, when the story was concluded, and said, "The cake was as good then as now; only we want another baked, and how are we to get it?"

"Why, it must be a Corn cake, I suppose," said Gray; "for it is the very devil of an entailed estate, that I can show nobody but him cause why they should lend me money."

"Oh, Gray," said I, "think how much it cost you."

"Very well observed of Miss Buckwell," said Mr. Tasebrook; "and, after all, the wisdom of congregated bodies has provided a fund for the necessities of individuals, which ought to obviate application to the resources of particulars."

"Do fall to plain speaking," said Gray. "As my uncle says, you are in your five syllables at present."

Mr. Tasebrook smiled. "I will adjure but three of the five in this instance," said he — "*In-sur-ance!*"

"Oh, yes," said Gray; "but I don't understand much about it. A gives B some money, does not he? — and B, if he does not spend it, gives it back to A's children — is not that it?"

"Not at all — not at all," said Mr. Tasebrook. "I can find a B who will let *you*, G B, have as much as you possibly can desire, and I will correspondingly animate a series of letters, A, B, C, and so on — or A, C, D, and so on (for B is already engaged) — who will pay to B what G B owes him."

"That is to say, what Gray Buckwell owes. I can't desire better," said Gray. "The bargain's made. Only tell me *how*."

Mr. Tasebrook took some books from the table, and

began placing them, to illustrate his meaning. "See here," said he. "'Bradshaw's Guide' stands for B, your friend, who is to supply the money. You are adumbrated by the inkstand, standing expectant of the gold B is to lend you; and the 'Review' here represents certain companies — A, C, D, let us call them — who, for the sake of certain annual considerations from the inkstand, engage to refund to B whatever he pours upon the said inkstand. The expense to you depends entirely on your anno domini and your hygeian state — in other words, your youth and health."

"Both being so irreproachable, the expense would not be great?"

"Well, it would not be small; but less than Corn costs you."

"Besides the brother of Corn."

"As you say."

"And here there's no danger of being cheated. One knows the worst of it," said Gray.

"Past doubt. It is the far-spreading Ægis, resting on the arm of a commercial Colossus."

"Bravo! Then I will insure."

Mr. Tasebrook, therefore, set about arranging for the insurance, and, in the meantime, remained in the house with us, settling and putting in order Gray's income and affairs. He was not a man to gain admiration by a nearer view of his character. It was all as hard as a brick. There was no soil for flowers to grow upon. "Cut down, cut down," said he, stretching out his hand to the unbounded forest edge. "It's all very well to keep two trees for shade — one on each side a house; but these notions of old associations and natural shapes are not adapted to the light of the present day; and

interest ought, in the course and order of civilisation, to take the place of the fantastic imaginations of olden times."

"Ay," cried Gray, with some indignation, "cut down all that is not pence and halfpence, though the pence are not worth their price. Now, for my part, I would not take away even that trophy of a successful stag-hunt, which some dead ancestor stuck there when he came from hunting, no doubt, one day, not if anybody would set me a stick of gold in its place."

"I would for a silver shilling," said Mr. Tasebrook; "for the shilling would buy me two pounds of mutton, while the antlers are only spoiling the wall."

"And where is the use of the two pounds of mutton, if all it does is to turn into thoughts how to get more mutton?" said Gray. "Dry bread, so eaten that it changes into feelings, is a great deal better."

"And that you think is done by chawing it under the shadow of your ancestors' silvan trophies?"

"At least, they will stay there for me," said Gray, getting up, and changing the conversation for a new subject.

Mr. Tasebrook did not support his poverty with much dignity. He was constantly displaying its ignoble cares without any modesty. He told us, without hesitation, how to save wine when one gave a party, and how to take best care of one's new hat in a shower of rain. "Shake it, but don't dry it," said he; "and wipe it lightly with a silk handkerchief." The transgressions of his servant also frequently formed the subject of discourse, and he added an account of his own ability in walking so lightly in old slippers that he very often detected peccadillos which would have escaped a louder

approach. These details were matters of much mirth to us, while Mr. Tasebrook, on the other hand, looked on the expenses incurred for charity's sake, or custom, or old observance, as a grown man does on the make-believe play of children. Nevertheless he made no objections; he acted on his great principle, that it was nothing to him.

When the arrangements with Mr. Corn came to be fully discussed, Mr. Tasebrook became acquainted with the provision made for me through his means. He expressed unbounded amazement at my good fortune, and seemed to consider me as above the reach of sorrow, since I had £10,000 secured to me; but, at the same time, he disapproved the means taken to provide this sum, and proposed to transfer the security to the same mode of providing money which he had already recommended. "The widow and orphan," said he, "are the peculiar care of the principle of insurance. They trust their little all to it with that confidence which arises from involving the interest of the debtor in the payment of the debt."

"Better than honour, better than charity, better than faith," said Gray, "twenty times."

"Decidedly," answered Mr. Tasebrook, very indifferently. "If by any extraordinary chance you had to depend on the honour and faith of these congregated bodies, you would learn the fallacy practically; that is to say, so far as fine words do no business, for wherever they can work for the society, then they are inviolable."

It was therefore decided that Gray should insure his life in my favour for the sum which he wished to secure to me, and discharge Mr. Corn from the whole of his agreement. To accomplish all this it was necessary to

pay a visit to London, and including me, to whom the journey was a delight, Gray left Buckwell; and all the parties concerned were to meet at his hotel on the following day.

Accordingly, about twelve o'clock, they assembled; Mr. Buckwell, our uncle, who was to answer for the insurability of Gray's life, came first, for he had a nervous punctuality which always brought him before the time; a quarter of an hour after the time, arrived Mr. Tasebrook and his client, Mr. Lockfield, who advanced the money, and who had been represented by the letter B in Mr. Tasebrook's demonstration. This latter person was an attorney, and was for the first time to-day made known to my brother. He looked and moved as if he would have entered the house with the striking of the clock, neither before nor after, had he been a free agent; but he was attached to the motions of Mr. Tasebrook, who was much more careless of time and order, and who disregarded the arrangements of other people, provided he fulfilled his own. Then came the patronising inquiries of Mr. Tasebrook to his father-in-law, and the careful and simple investigation of my uncle into the fatigue suffered by his nephew, and the subsequent precautions taken; his polite and old-fashioned way of extending the same questions, though he did not act the same interest in them, to Mr. Lockfield (the attorney), and Gray's frank greeting to all.

They presently settled to the business in hand; and explanations of what was to be done were given and received. There was no little difficulty in instructing Mr. Buckwell in his part, however simple it would have appeared to most people. But every word he uttered was a matter of uneasiness to him, lest it should be wrong

in some way, and produce untold consequences. "I am very anxious, nephew," said he, "to lose no time in looking at the questions you wish me to answer. Is it a usual thing, pray, to look at them? I suppose they won't suspect me of concerting my reply with you?"

"They will be ignorant of the fact for one thing," said his son-in-law.

"Not if they ask me," said my uncle. "If they ask me I shall certainly tell them; indeed, if they don't ask me, I shall think myself bound to say that I was prepared by previous consideration to answer their questions, and that my nephew was present when I perused the paper."

"Poh, poh, sir," cried Mr. Tasebrook, "don't superimpose difficulties. We will put it all straight for you."

"That's not what I can consent to," said my uncle, hastily; "you must not, indeed you must not, lead me to do anything against my judgment; and, though I should be exceedingly sorry to throw the least impediment in your way, Gray, yet, if I were asked, or if I thought it right to say I had talked over the affair with you, I must do it, indeed I must."

"But," said Gray, "if they knew you had deliberated half a year they would only be the better pleased."

"To be sure," said Mr. Tasebrook; "that follows as a matter of course."

"Oh, very well," said my uncle, "why could not you tell me that before? Then show me the papers." Mr. Lockfield handed him a number of forms of certificates. Most persons would have treated the questions contained in them as matters of course, and taken their general knowledge and impression as the standard by which to frame their replies on this particular occasion; but to

my uncle it seemed quite another matter to answer the same question when it was printed and when it was spoken; there was plainly a solemnity and order about the former which made it unnatural in his eyes to reply in a mere simple talking way. "How can I tell," said he, reading aloud the first inquiry, "whether you ever had gout or asthma? I never saw you have them. It is impossible for me to say you have."

"No, they don't want you to do so, nor I either; we shall be quite satisfied if you say I have not."

"But, of course, everybody knows you have not, as well as I do. What's the meaning of asking such questions? They can't expect me to say I have been with you all your life long."

"Don't you think you have been with me enough to be pretty sure I am not much troubled with gout," said Gray.

"I can't say, my dear nephew, anything about it. I never saw nor heard of any of these complaints in you nor any of the rest of the family, and how can I give any information?"

"That will do," said Mr. Lockfield, whose eyes had been examining and inquiring ever since my uncle's disputation began, and who now appeared perfectly satisfied.

"Give voice to those conclusions; give them the local habitation of the blood of the ink-bottle," said Mr. Tasebrook; "they are sufficient."

"What do you mean, James?" said my uncle impatiently.

"He means, write it down, sir," said I.

"Oh, why could not you say so at once, then? Not but what your language is very fine and excellent; I am

sure you have quite the gift of speaking well," added my uncle. "Well, what's the next question. Is he subject to insanity? No; I must be wrong; dear me, my eyes are very bad."

"No, you are quite right, sir," said I, looking over the paper; "that is the question."

"Now, that is absurd," cried Mr. Buckwell, laying it down; "I can't think of replying in this way. They must, certainly, mean something I don't understand; something to catch me if I merely say the truth."

"No, no," said the grave Mr. Lockfield, smiling, notwithstanding his gravity, for half an instant; "answer merely the truth."

"But that is not worth while," said Mr. Buckwell; "if they propose inquiries like that, they will expect some satisfaction in them; and they ought to go to people who can make out a discourse better than I can. I really know nothing at all of these matters."

"But, don't you see, sir, that is all that's wanting," said Gray; "they ask whether you know or whether you do not know; and, if you can't say yes, you can say no, which is an answer."

"So it is, certainly; only it is so very obvious that you never were mad. Everybody knows you never were mad."

"Nor bad," said Gray, laughing; "yet, you see, they inquire, morally and physically, whether I drink and whether I am sick."

"Well, and you have been sick," cried my uncle manfully; "when that fellow threw a stone at you, Gray, you were very ill. It was, certainly, a circumstance that might have shortened your life."

"But not a habit, my dear sir," interposed Mr. Lockfield, gently.

"No; that was not a failing of mine," said Gray; "if they should propose the question, you could not say I had the habit of having stones thrown at me."

"Nay, you are talking nonsense now, nephew," said Mr. Buckwell, "and I am bound in this matter to weigh my words. I must treat this matter seriously."

"As seriously as you please, sir," interrupted his son-in-law; "but not hypocritically. Set the paddle against the tide and cleave the waters, for men cannot wait in these stirring times for the circuitous tediousness of the sailing boat."

Mr. Buckwell was quite quelled, and his little irritability gave way before the great indignation of his superior son-in-law — he had no more opposition to offer; but he retired into a corner, and took the paper to con over and digest by himself. He was not willing that Mr. Tasebrook should even see what he was about, and when he came near pulled the newspaper over it, and looked as if he was reading the debates. However, Mr. Lockfield was perfectly satisfied. The more he saw of the scruples of his referee, the more clearly he was convinced that his own money was never placed on a better life. So far, then, all was arranged, but it seemed further, that the terms of the insurance-proposal required a reference to be given to the *usual medical attendant*. Now, there was a difficulty in this, because when a man is never ill, it is hard to say who is his doctor. "*Nobody*" would perhaps have been the best doctor to mention; but Mr. Tasebrook did not like this. He was always taking physic himself, and the regulation of his health formed the accompaniment to the perpetual regulation of

his affairs, so that if a man had not a talent for prescribing for himself, it followed that he must be in the habit of resorting to some other to do it for him.

"I see, by fictitiously representing myself to be the inner man of your consciousness," said he, "the state of your ratiocination on the subject; but you are erroneous — you presume that by denying communication with the sons of Galen, you shall best establish your normal state to be health; but, believe me, that rather than never to 'remember an apothecary,' it were better to be proved conversant with the whole college of physicians."

"Let them prove *that* of me," said Gray, "and they may prove what they will — fits, insanity — and drinking into the bargain."

"And so they could, and so they would, if their lawyers had a mind," said Mr. Tasebrook. "But we will trust them not to do that, because their own interest does not demand it."

"No, I don't suspect them," said Gray, carelessly.

"Still, we are not come to the doctor," said Mr. Tasebrook.

The only person, if a reference must be given at all, was evidently Dr. Monkton. If not a "regular attendant," he was at least the medical man who knew most about my brother, from the intimacy of his private acquaintance. Besides, on occasion of the blow from the poacher's stone, it was Dr. Monkton who had attended him, and as that was the only illness of which he could boast, the witness of it had the best right to the title of physician in ordinary. Gray, therefore, made an application to him the next day, and he promised to appear at the office to give his favourable testimony. It was

so arranged then, and when the hour came they all prepared to make their appearance before the board, a ceremony dispensed with if the insuring party desires it; but Gray thought it least trouble, and most security to let all the parties interested judge for themselves whether he was a subject whom they would choose to insure.

Dr. Monkton took me in his carriage, promising himself pleasure from my surprise and delight at the novelty of London; and as we went he fell into the philosophising strain which was habitual to him: "You are too fond of life, Katherine," said he, "too sure of it. Whatever we do important has a smack of death in it, like this present business, for instance. We can't take any great step in life, but what we have to provide against the one certain thing — death."

"I don't forget it," said I. "Why should you think so?"

"You do — you do. Should you be a bit the readier to-morrow to hear or see that the one event that happeneth to all had overtaken yonder noble fellow, because you hear and see to-day that he is doing that thing, the very reasonableness of which is the chance of dying to-morrow — this minute? Not you. The tears come in your eyes at the thought; that's foolish."

"Yes, foolish, because it is so very unlikely."

"Not at all on that account, but because it is so very possible. What is possible is always near, and what is near ought not to have power over the spirit; — we should look it in the face."

"Ay, but not as if it were already familiar. If Gray were my uncle," said I, looking at them both as we passed them in the street, "it would be more reasonable to do as you say. Just look, Dr. Monkton, is he not

safe as yet?" He did so, and the sight of the two struck him. My brother — young, frank, upright — his eye and air saluting the world, as it were, which surrounded him with sensations and promises of pleasure. My uncle, who held his arm, withered, and yet with a hectic red that looked like trouble and apprehension, his eyes depressed, his shape thin, and little of joy or the capacity of joy remaining in his face or figure. He seemed on the twilight side of life, and Gray on the sunny — one climbing the hill with the sun, the other going down further into the shadow.

Dr. Monkton smiled. "Ay, ay," said he, "a fine creature. I love health and beauty when one sees it. A human being is intended to be both beautiful and happy; but it is better still to be able to dispense with them, Katherine — that is nobler still."

I answered nothing — where was the use of arguing? — and soon we arrived at the door of the office, which he entered with Gray and the rest. It need not be said that Gray was willingly accepted, and that no difficulty intervened to prevent the full accomplishment of the business. Gray would hear no thanks from me, and no remonstrances from Dr. Monkton, on the greatness of the sum which he had been compelled to stipulate to pay annually to the office. "I pay them largely," said he, "and they undertake largely for me — all fair; and if I live as I promise to do if possible, they have made an excellent bargain for themselves."

"Fair again, even if you die," said Mr. Tasebrook, "because they calculate their affairs on the general run of life; so they can say nothing against it, if Atropos close her shears on you to-morrow."

"All right, then," said Gray; "and now we set forward again to enjoy life."

Dr. Monkton and ourselves came down from London together, and we agreed to stay for a day or two at his house on our road to Buckwell. This visit appeared at the time to have nothing to do with our fortunes, although with those of Gray's *protégé*, Jonathan Wolfe, it was very deeply concerned, and this was the manner in which he was interested in it.

Dr. Monkton had some voluminous medical papers to arrange, which he was about to publish, and which he had determined to employ Wolfe to copy — the latter was a good scribe, which was his first recommendation. Indeed, Dr. Monkton would have had no pity for a man with a story, however pathetic, unless he possessed at the same time the full abilities which were to be paid for; but when his growing passion for money was satisfied, he was afterwards never sorry to find out that there was some romantic circumstance about those he employed. He therefore reflected with satisfaction upon the comparatively ladylike appearance and manners of Mrs. Wolfe, which indicated a story of former prosperity sacrificed to love of the plebeian father of young Jonathan. The odd meeting we had had with the latter on the mountain, and the eccentric nature of his distress, contributed to the interest with which Dr. Monkton regarded him. Gray had done a great deal for the education of the young man, and had set a negociation on foot to procure him some permanent situation. In the meantime, Jonathan was too happy to secure any employment which might add to the slender resources

of his mother and himself, and relieve their dependance on Gray; and the first thing he did when Dr. Monkton gave him some work, was to request the weekly allowance might be suspended which they had lately received. The pay he earned was indeed hardly equal to it, for Dr. Monkton very exactly measured the remuneration given by the services received. But with prudence it was sufficient, and the pride of independence was too generous a feeling to be tampered with. His renunciation of the allowance was therefore accepted, and with pleasure and industry did he pursue his occupation with Dr. Monkton.

When we arrived at Dr. Monkton's house, everything seemed still in a prosperous state. The copying had gone on successfully, the employer praised, and the employed received his commendations gratefully; but after the first conference between Dr. Monkton and his housekeeper, it was evident that something had diminished the fulness of his complacency in Jonathan. He said nothing about it, however, till, on the third evening of our stay, he re-entered the drawing-room after a mysterious absence to which he had been invited by his butler, and announced that Jonathan Wolfe had approved himself a knave.

"I'm disappointed," said Dr. Monkton, "not deceived, for to be deceived one must trust, and that I never do. Yet, indeed, this young man *seemed* a favourable subject."

"Seemed only? Has he fallen to that?" I said. "I thought he had proved fully equal to all you required of him."

"Yes," said Dr. Monkton, "he has not failed in the task assigned him, but his character is bad — he steals wine from my table to sell it.

"Oh, I'll never believe that," cried Gray, in haste. "It's wholly out of character."

"Yet," answered Dr. Monkton, "if I see a dog lap beer, I don't disbelieve it because he has hitherto been a water drinker."

"Nothing short, however, of seeing," said Gray.

"Then that satisfaction you may enjoy," said Dr. Monkton; and he went on to relate that the servants, whose suspicions had been excited, had watched him narrowly, and detected a bag with which he was gliding away, filled with nearly as much food as he himself, or any other stout young man, could have eaten in a day. The culprit was stopped, and Dr. Monkton having been informed of the fact, had ordered him to be brought into the room where we were assembled, in order that his guilt or his innocence might be demonstrated before us. Accordingly he had hardly prepared us for the scene when the unfortunate Jonathan appeared between two of the servants, and, bag and all, was stationed before us. The bag was opened, and there, indeed, the mutton, the bread, the cheese, the bottle containing wine were all drawn out, and Jonathan stood beside pale and silent. He offered no exculpation at first, though Gray vehemently exhorted him to account for these appearances. His employer told him that, for his part, he fully understood them. The contempt and indifference of this remark, and of the tone in which it was made, urged the colour up into his face and the fire into his eyes, and by broken words, and against his will, as it were, he began at last to tell a story for himself; but the explanation was worse than the thing to be explained. It came out in such words as these: "Five pounds —

you gave me to pay bills — I sold my own dinners to replace it."

"In short," said Dr. Monkton, "you spent upon other objects that with which I trusted you to discharge debts, and next stole my goods to make up the deficiency."

Jonathan said not a word, he flung out his arms to their full width, like one, who being impotent to wreak his rage, would rend himself in pieces to vent it, and with a howl of the most piteous misery, he darted out of the room, crying one word only — "False!"

"I shall prosecute him," said Dr. Monkton, "so don't let him escape." Accordingly they ran out to secure him.

Gray was as angry as Dr. Monkton. I said nothing, but I fully believed Jonathan's innocence. I did not dare say so; but I got away as soon as I could, unobserved, and went straight to the room where for the present he was detained. He was sitting against a table; his arms folded on it, and his face hidden on his arms. He would not move, nor answer me when I spoke.

"Mr. Wolfe," said I, "listen to me; you are in danger, and I want to speak to you. For your mother's sake do speak to me," I said, seeing he continued unmoved; but still he was silent and motionless. "Consider how she will be expecting you," I said; but that topic, though it might increase his sufferings, did not force him to utterance. "But Mr. Wolfe," said I, "you ought to speak to *me*, because ....." and then I paused a moment, and, having thought, I went on, with haste and conviction — "because, I believe you innocent."

The poor young man on this lifted up his head and looked me full in the face, collecting, with all his powers, my real meaning; and when he had satisfied himself, which he did in a few moments, that I spoke

from my heart, and not for the sake of persuading him to listen to me, he got up and began to thank me in a transport of gratitude as if I had been a spirit taking care of him. *His* joy was that he should be believed; but it was my concern that others should be convinced as well as myself; and I began therefore to question him concerning the affair. He said he could not explain it. Dr. Monkton, before his journey to London, had given him five pounds to discharge an account in the village through which he was passing on his way home; he had walked there with the note in his hand, and when he reached the house it was gone. He had spent the night in searching the path, but in vain; and at last had fallen upon the following expedient to replace it, an expedient which had led to his present disgrace. He could not, he said, appropriate any part of his salary to the purpose because his mother wanted it all. The only disposable thing that remained to him was his daily food. He had abstained from eating anything except as much bread as would just support nature, and had engaged in the hopeless expedient of disposing of the remainder among the cottagers, scrupulously observing, as he said, the exact quantity which he supposed his appetite would require to satisfy it. By similar abstinence he reckoned that he had earned as it were one whole bottle of wine, having abstained from the customary portion allotted to him; and it was the attempt to possess himself of this treasure which had betrayed him.

Poor Wolfe! it was such an odd plan that I could have smiled, had not his situation been too serious; as it was I felt how very hopeless the attempt must be to persuade Dr. Monkton of what I myself believed; and, without that, his disgrace, if no further bad consequence,

was inevitable. The five pounds, I told him, Gray would give him; but he felt, as I did, that the money could now do him no good. Nothing but the very note would save him; "the very note," he repeated, for Dr. Monkton had read it over aloud before giving it to him, and had put down the number in his pocket-book. "Another note might release him from prosecution, but only that one could restore his character." While he was speaking, I observed that, in his agitation, he had rolled into a dozen shapes a bit of paper which he had taken up from the table, and presently, without being himself aware of it, he jerked it from him, and went on speaking as before. When that was gone he seized another, which he treated in the same manner, and the subject he was upon made me remark the gesture.

"That's the way you lost the note," said I, stopping him in the middle of his sentence, and making him observe what he was doing. He stopped, quite unconscious of what he was about; but when I showed him what I meant, his face grew pale, his thin hands shook, and the idea suddenly flashing on his mind, he cried, "it was true; he must have flung the note into the river; for he recollected now, that while he was walking by it, he had torn a leaf from a bush to roll it in place of something which he had just thrown away. The scratch he got from the prickly leaf made him recollect it, and that something must have been the note."

"Can't you recollect the exact spot?" said I.

"If I could," he answered, reproachfully, "where would be the use? It was by the river, and eight days ago."

I acknowledged the hopelessness, and yet could not

but desire to know the very spot. He recalled it owing to some local circumstance.

"Yes, it must have been just where the stones of the brook that runs into the river made me stumble," he said, hitting his clenched hands against his forehead.

Well, it certainly was most hopeless, and yet such an infinite deal of happiness for this individual rested on the threadbare chance, that the faintest hope was enough to act upon. But it was dark by this time, and nothing could be done till another day. I went back to the drawing-room, and found that Dr. Monkton had already given orders to take the prisoner and the witnesses before a magistrate as early the next day as it could be expected that business should be done. He himself had made a previous arrangement for the morrow, but rather than it should interfere with the pursuit of justice, he intended to set off still earlier than the rest, in order to fulfil his engagement, and afterwards to meet poor Jonathan and his accusers at the house of the magistrate. This seemed to me the only fortunate circumstance in the whole affair, as it gave some leisure and opportunity for my search in the morning; but in the presence of Dr. Monkton I did not venture to say what my project was, for he possessed in a high degree the art of putting one's confidence to silence. All the house retired to rest, therefore, under these gloomy auspices; but it was no sooner daylight the next day than I went to Gray's door, and awakening him, told him the whole story and invited him to come with me to the river side. He was soon ready, and we ran together down to the path which Jonathan had pointed out. It is of no use to tarry over the particulars of our search, though hours went by, and we heard Dr.

Monkton's carriage hurrying down the road, while we were engaged in it. We began at six, and it was very near nine, when I discovered, and was afraid at first to speak for joy, the very note, crumpled, trampled, tightly stuck under a stone, curled up into a hard little roll. Yes, the very note which was to be so much happiness to a human being. I held it to Gray, still without speaking, and he saying nothing more sentimental than, by Jove! or by George! caught hold of my arm and away we both ran to the house, as if we had been mad. We rushed into the prisoner's room, and there I tried to speak and only cried; and Gray explained the result, shaking Jonathan's hand, and bidding him be a man, for indeed joy overcame him. "But the magistrate, Gray," cried I, "the warrant! Let us write word to Dr. Monkton."

"Ay, do; and send man and horse directly after him," said Gray, calling one of the servants to give orders accordingly. "But, my child," cried he, laughing as he came back to the table, "how you write; your hand shakes as if you were tipsy. Come, let me try."

"You don't do it much better, Gray," said I, after he had scribbled a line or two. "What bad writing!"

"They are the most noble characters in the world," sobbed Wolfe, looking over Gray's shoulder, and taking from the ground the half sheet on which I had begun, and which I had torn when my brother took the pen from me. "They are the writing of my saviours, my benefactors. They are sacred characters." So saying he put the torn sheet into his breast, and Gray laughed, and folded up his hasty letter.

Dr. Monkton was recalled by it, and was ready at once to acknowledge his error. There was a seeming reconciliation, but from that time, Jonathan's handwriting

never was good, nor Dr. Monkton's demands reasonable, although before, the very same characters and the same requests had given satisfaction to both parties. In a week after, accordingly, they parted, and Gray, after a time, procured the situation in London for young Wolfe which he had hoped for. Gray was the more anxious to do this quickly as he himself was about to set out on an autumn expedition on the continent, and he wished to establish Jonathan securely before he went. For my part, I could not help being glad of the few days' delay to the journey, which the execution of this project entailed; for to part with Gray was a subject of unmixed pain to me, even although he was going where he would be better pleased and amused than if he stayed at home. I knew that, but I went on dreading the parting day, just as much as if I had not known it. It came only too soon, I thought. The preparations were completed, Wolfe provided for, and at last the dreaded moment arrived, when the carriage is heard sweeping round to the door, and when all the resolution and the bravery collected against the parting, give way before that hasty sight and sound. Dr. Monkton and Gray wondered at me. Gray was gentle and merciful, but he laughed at what I knew I ought to laugh at too. He kissed me, springing lightly into the carriage; nodded again to Dr. Monkton, and, looking round when the carriage was about to turn into the avenue, took off his hat and, half in sport half in love, made us both a long salute before the trees hid him. Dr. Monkton looked after him till he could see him no longer, and then suddenly turned to me, and inquired why I was crying.

"Nay," said he, "if I had not turned upon you so

quickly you would have hidden your tears, but you ought not to have shed any."

"Why not? why may not I cry when I am sorry, as well as laugh when I am glad?" said I, released by the discovery of my tears from trying to repress them, and too much inclined to weep, not to do so plentifully when thus set at liberty.

"But what is to make you sorry?" asked Dr. Monkton; "if there were any good cause, I would not deny your right to the natural expression of it — you put that fairly enough, but there is none."

"None in parting from my brother for two months, or three?"

"No; it is neither natural nor advantageous for people to live always together. Everybody has something to do by himself, which is better done when he is wholly independent than in any other way. Gray is going to travel — you are going to learn your own powers at home — nothing the least out of the common way in the matter. You ought to leave crying to people who are never more going to see the person they part from. If they love them there is something in that."

"There is something, I think, in parting at all," cried I; "though I shall see him in December, that does not make him less absent in September, and October, and November."

"No, no; I don't say it does," answered Dr. Monkton, who sometimes, I think, regretted that he had taught me to see the fallacies of received phrases; "but as the evil is granted and inevitable, it remains for you to make the best of it. You must not lose your time in merely waiting and looking for him, you must be active and useful while he is away; for suppose you think of

nothing else for the next two months, or three, as you say, except seeing him again; if he come back unchanged you will wish you had done better, and if he come back changed, you will be obliged to learn a hard lesson all in one minute."

"Changed?" said I.

"Yes; suppose he married. Should not you be glad that his happiness increased?" Dr. Monkton here touched the string which, as I have said, jarred most of all those in my heart. It was the most probable interruption to my happiness, and the feeling it excited was as near jealousy as possible. He showed his knowledge of human nature by expecting me to suffer from it, and his voluntary self-delusion by inquiring if I did not wish it, since it would make Gray happier than he could be unmarried.

My lips said "Yes," to it, and my heart, "No." It was another fallacy which Dr. Monkton here proposed, but he knew that I could not well give a negative in the form he proposed it, and he was not honest enough with himself to allow that silencing and satisfying are very different things. The dialogue, therefore, dropped, and I went about the dull task of living without Gray with a little more discomposure than before it began. Dr. Monkton's advice to make myself useful I attended to, however; and, indeed, on that point I was more likely to err by excess than deficiency of zeal. I felt so much occasion to conciliate the world's good opinion, that I did not venture to neglect any opportunity of doing so. Nothing pleased me better than when any one came to say, "If you'll speak for me, they will mind Sir Gray's sister, and I shall *do* then." And to justify confidence on that ground I would make any effort, and

perform any request, with little reference to the merits of the case.

Time, however tedious, wears away, and wearily as it rolled to me, it brought in its course the period fixed at first for my brother's return, but still, through one cause or another, he delayed his coming, and I was forced to postpone my hopes. The things I had to tell him began to spoil, if I may say so; they were grown old, and, though new ones arose, I felt the length of his absence by being obliged to renounce telling what was to have been so interesting. Everything contributed to give me that longing to see an absent person which altogether frets one's heart, till it is comforted, and warmed by gratification. A friend of Gray's, whom he had accompanied, fell ill, and Gray would not leave him before he was able to move; he wrote in impatience to return, but Christmas came near, and still he was not at home. "It will be no Christmas without Sir Gray," said the housekeeper, and so it seemed, indeed. The poor people had their beef and blankets; the holly-berries were stuck in the windows; the servants had their merry makings as usual; and the time of rejoicing was come for me also, but without the joy. I thought of that year when we passed our Christmas so completely alone together; and when this season had been to me perhaps the very highest point of the joy of my life. I did not want the same scene to return, for I had learned that it had been bad for Gray though so good for me; but I thought of it over and over, and stood by the fire looking into the red embers, and reflecting how we two had been beside the same hearth, and how I had trusted no Christmas would ever come and not find us there.

But it was all solitary now, and, in the impatience

of being alone, I began to think if there was anybody who would be glad to see me, or to whom I could give any pleasure and receive it from them. I could fix on no one in particular, and then I began to long more passionately than ever for Gray; and then again, in order to do something, I set out to see Mrs. Wolfe, and try to find occasion to be useful at all events, if I could not manage to be amused. My visit was not ill-timed, for she had the day before had a letter from her son, inviting her to join him in London, where he began to find himself established in such employment as authorised him to remove his mother, and to offer her the prospect of a permanent and tolerably comfortable home. I was pleased, for all this good came from Gray; and I felt animated with the pleasure which Mrs. Wolfe must experience, and which she would attribute to him as its cause; but she rather checked my enthusiasm.

"I am sure it is my duty and pleasure," said Mrs. Wolfe, "to be thankful to Providence and Sir Gray too; for it is not all of us are born to good fortune, like you, dear ma'am."

"Do you think I am so very fortunate, Mrs. Wolfe?"

"Nay, now, if I had a right, which I'm sure I have not, I could almost find courage to give advice to a lady like you, asking such a question. *I* am contented as it is, but if I had your advantages, certainly I could not tell what to complain of."

"No, no; who complains?"

"Now, you seem to me to have everything to make life desirable; at least, I'm sure *I* should say so, if I were so favoured; such a pretty pony as that is to ride upon, and such a nice little maid as you have to wait

on you; and such a fine place to ride back to, and nothing to do but go out and come in again, and find the best dinner ready with no trouble of yours."

"Yes; that's all true."

"Ah, dear lady, may you never live to remember it *is* so."

"But I remember it now, and I acknowledge that all of us have reason to be thankful for our situation, some in one way, some in another."

"Ay, that's what's always thrown in the teeth of us poor people. The great and the rich say, and very easy it is for them, — Oh, you ought to be thankful, nobody considering in the least what sort of trials another's is."

I did not think it necessary to argue the point with Mrs. Wolfe, much less to retort, and therefore turned our conversation to such matters as would be necessary or agreeable for her journey; a new gown, a cloak freshly lined against the cold weather, and some money in her purse. All this she received kindly, congratulating me upon the power and pleasure of doing good, and saying that if it had been allotted to her, she should indeed have been glad to be the giver. "But my trials," said she, "come upon me just in those very ways where they are hardest for me to bear them. If I've any merit, it is that of loving to comfort and help my fellow-creatures, and just, therefore, I'm obliged to be under obligation to everybody and do good to none. Even where one should think I might look for comfort, even Jonathan gets above taking so much as good counsel from me."

"I always thought," said I (for I had observed and admired his obedience and forbearance towards his

mother), "that he was particularly attentive to your admonitions."

"Ay, but do you know, Miss Buckwell, that since he has been in London I fear there have been changes in him. I thought them beginning before he went away."

"Nay; you don't say so," I cried, surprised, and now, indeed, beginning to pity Mrs. Wolfe.

"Yes, I assure you," answered the mother, looking very serious; "he is a clever boy and a learned, and there's the mischief, Miss Buckwell; he has not learning enough for his conceits, and they are getting the upper hand of him. I am sorry to tell you he is growing over good, very fast indeed."

"That's better than growing bad, however," said I, "and more uncommon too; come, I don't think there is much harm done yet."

"Why, I don't know, ma'am; there's pretty much the same mischief in one as the other; young men *are* young men, come when it will, and in my young days, you must know, that whenever they got any book learning they turned all to doubting and disbelieving, without the least reason, directly; now they never get it without thinking they've a right to go about believing and teaching. It will be very hard upon me if I am to be taught by my own son at my time of life."

"So it will," said I, agreeing for agreement sake; "at the same time, having a son, a companion, and one whose first wish when he makes a little money is to share it with you, is certainly an advantage on your side over other people."

"Oh, I don't deny my blessings," said Mrs. Wolfe, colouring a little, partly in anger; "but I'm afraid, Miss Buckwell, after all, I'm afraid his haste to have me, on

the first blush of his fortunes, is only some scruple about the fifth commandment."

"Well," said I, laughing involuntarily, "it's a very good rule, is not it?"

"Oh, ma'am, you are a very perfect, good churchwoman, a benefactress to me, I'm sure; a lady highly favoured, but you don't know what a mother's natural feelings are."

Now it was my turn to colour, and the burning blush spread all over my face. Mrs. Wolfe had hardly meant what she said, and was confused at her own success. I thought she seemed half afraid of having done herself an injury, and that I should bestow like one offended after the offence; therefore my pride made me put more than the promised money into her hands. But, for her sake and mine too, I also, after this awkwardness between us, speedily ended the visit.

When I came back I found Dr. Monkton had been at Buckwell. I was sorry to have missed him. I should have liked to talk a little with somebody this Christmas time. "Everything goes wrong," thought I; "it is all unlucky and cross-grained;" and I opened a note which he had left. Of all his odd conceits it contained the oddest, for he had determined in his own mind that it was good for me to go to a ball, and he came to tell me he would take me to one himself, which was to be held on the last night of the old year, at Norden. This ought to have given me satisfaction, after the feeling of solitude and neglect I had just before experienced; but, somehow or other, I was conscious that it was merely a philosophical experiment on his part, designed rather to show me the vanity of amusement than to give me the enjoyment of the vanity. I wanted to be pleased, not

taught, and was vexed to be aware that I was the object of instruction even in a ball-room. Yet how perverse to refuse amusement when I had just been longing for it, and when it was offered to me by an old friend; who probably himself hardly knew that he intended it as a mere lesson. Besides, who could tell but what by chance I might be amused? I loved society when society was kind to me. But I knew the disadvantages under which I appeared in the world, and felt to my heart how they isolated me. If Gray was with me I was safe; his presence insured consideration for me. People knew then who I was, they saw I was cared for, and I felt that I was so. But when he was absent, I was thrown on my own resources, and as soon as I had engaged to venture the experiment, I was unhappy and fearful, and felt almost as if I had done wrong, from having done so foolishly. Oh, if Gray would come! but, on the very morning of the ball, there arrived a letter from him to say that his return was absolutely fixed for four days after that time, neither sooner nor later. So, longing much to remain at home, now he was so near coming, and misgiving much, and hoping a little, I went to Dr. Monkton's; and he and I together drove to Norden.

Among all the people in the room I did not recognise at first any one I was acquainted with, but I was not ill occupied for a little while in looking round me on a scene of gaiety and merriment in which, for aught I knew, I still might be allowed to participate. I saw people shaking hands, curtseying, smiling, and preparing to enjoy all the excitement of the dancing which was about to begin. Dr. Monkton was greeted by his various friends with the good humour and cordiality belonging to an old established neighbour. The gracious Lady

Aldbrooke, who was patroness for the night, sailed by in her crimson velvet; and her beautiful daughter walked beside her, attended by her partner for the quadrille. The rest of the party followed, and all stopped to speak to Dr. Monkton. "This is a marvellous sight," said the great lady, shaking hands with him. "I am very much flattered by your appearance at my ball."

"You see the merit of making an article rare," said Dr. Monkton; "by what other means could I make myself an acceptable offering to you?"

"Oh, I don't know that," said Lady Aldbrooke, not having anything better to reply; and so much of the dialogue was done with. The rest of the party greeted and were greeted by him, and they formed the most distinguished looking set in the room, and seemed in great good humour with each other and the world. Miss Aldbrooke was not last to address Dr. Monkton. She was about my age; was an only daughter, very much flattered, very good humoured and beautiful. "A beautiful face is a silent advocate," says some one, and this young lady was a proof of it, in the readiness of every one to believe her witty and agreeable. "Have you practised your *en avant deux?*" said she to Mr. Monkton; "if so I am ready to keep my promise."

"What promise, Henrietta?" said her mother.

"Made when I was at Felongcourt," said Dr. Monkton, "that if I executed a faithful imitation of the saltatory manœuvre set me as a pattern by Miss Aldbrooke, I should be the claimant of her hand at the next ball. But I am no Cinderella; I can't get on the glass slipper."

"Oh, then, I am not to take all the honour of your

appearance to myself," said the lady. "It was concerted, I see, between you and Henrietta."

"A concerted piece," said the beauty, "by D.M., M.D., &c." I did not think this very funny, but it was quite sufficiently so, said in a ball-room, and by a beauty too, so I felt willing to laugh with the rest of the party who were all looking at each other, and applauding the *môt;* but having no right to catch anybody's eye, my offer of applause was rather questionably looked upon. Even Miss Aldbrooke just glanced a query at me, as much as to say, "What's the matter?" and turned to a shy young man of her circle, whom she got credit with herself and others for attending to. They all passed on; only as they went, one of them, a gentleman, whispered to another, "Who's that plain girl with Dr. Monkton?" and the lady questioned said, "Only a natural daughter of old Sir George's." With this sharp blow ringing on my ear, I was not much in a mood to profit by Dr. Monkton's philosophy on occasion of the gay and gallant party.

"Now, you see, Katherine, how flimsy the talk is, which one gets in these places, and from these people. It is not worth hearing, much less uttering; it's below thinking about." Nevertheless he had joined in it with uncommon readiness.

Now girls go to a ball-room to dance, not to philosophise, so that I found Dr. Monkton's society to be less desirable than usual. He also began to be rather weary of mine, for he felt the necessity, while he was with me, of keeping up this tone of stoicism; and on the contrary, the scene suggested the more natural pastime of a little scandal, or a little county politics, or a little card-playing.

When at last, therefore, looking to the new arrivals, I saw the Careys, and cried joyfully, "There's Mr. Carey," he was as glad as I. I perceived their look of surprise when they saw me; however, both came up to meet us when we advanced, and Mrs. Carey being speedily engaged in a quadrille, he stayed talking a little to me, and my *chaperon* took the opportunity, and stepped away without saying a word, into the card-room. At first I was glad, because I liked Mr. Carey, and flattered myself he would talk the more and the longer, for finding that I was left alone; but I soon felt my error. He did not like me well enough, I should say there was nothing attractive enough in me to make him take pains to reconcile the ball-room to me, and me to the ball-room; he liked better the society of those whose natural place it was, and therefore when he had done his duty as a neighbour, by saying all the common things of a meeting to me, he began to look as if he would be glad I should provide for my own amusement. His eyes ceased to meet mine, if he addressed or answered me; his comprehension grew so obtuse, that he was obliged to ask twice what it was I had said. Any approach to fun he took literally, and explained my allusions most methodically; and if any one else talked to him, and I addressed him in the course of the conversation, he did not perceive that I was uttering a sound. More indignant perhaps than I had occasion to be, yet saying nothing, looking nothing, I turned away as soon as I recognised anybody, and set myself down by a fat old lady, whom I thought the most tedious person in existence. Mr. Carey went away immediately, and for the sake of not looking quite forlorn, I talked to the old lady at intervals, and even contrived to laugh, particularly if I thought it pos-

sible that he should be observing me, but probably my pains were unnecessary.

At first I found it very difficult to support the appearance of interest and hilarity which I had determined upon, for my new companion was one of those persons who had been early broken in to dulness, and who liked it as well as anything else. She had been accustomed for years to sit by the wall of the ball-room, in a peach-coloured gown, and an amethyst cross, and she aspired to no higher excitement than what this situation of affairs afforded. She had a dancing daughter, who brought her here at present, but she was so contented with her own sedentary share of the amusement, that she would have come and sate had there been no daughter to dance. "The room is very full, the room is very hot, the room is very well boarded, the room has not been built long, has it?" said I, and everything else which could be said about the room. She answered, "Yes, and very, and so it is," and whatever else was usually answered, and then was returning to silence according to established custom; but for the sake of looking happy, I was forced to deny her the comfort. "Dear me, who is that lady in pink?" said I, just as if I knew everybody else in the room; "I never saw her before."

"That is Mrs. Adam — she comes always with me," said my old lady. "She lives four miles from our house."

"Oh, I had forgotten — so it is, indeed; and do you come to every ball, Mrs. Brown?"

"Why, yes, mostly — Cecil likes dancing; so unless Mr. Brown keeps me away with his gout, I am generally here."

"But don't you play at cards — I see they have a room open?"

"No, not often; I did it before Cecil came out; but she likes me to keep a place for her, and to be near when she has done dancing, so I have not played lately."

"That's very good of you," said I, thinking who would do as much for me.

"Good?" said the old lady, a little surprised and a little pleased; "dear me, Miss Buckwell, it's quite natural to think of one's young people, you know. They want a little care."

"So they do," said I. Mrs. Brown, I suppose, was led by my voice, though I certainly did not intend it, to think of me, for she looked at me for a minute, as though some idea independent of her daughter's dancing, and Mr. Brown's gout, were crossing her mind, and then said, "If you like to dance, I'll look for Thomas; I'm sure he will be very happy."

"Oh, no, don't," cried I, the picture of reluctant Thomas caught and brought by his fat mother, rising hideously before me. "I am not very fond of dancing, thank you. I had rather sit here. It's a long time since I have seen you."

"So it is," said Mrs. Brown, and she seemed to think that if I saw her, and she saw me, it was enough for the calls of our mutual friendship, for she did not propose any further subject. I was obliged to begin again.

"Have you seen Mr. and Mrs. Smitton lately?" said I; for at that moment I caught sight of Mrs. Carey performing her graceful part in a quadrille, and by an association which certainly she would never have thought could have been suggested by her, that ungain family

rose before my mind. The old lady said nothing but "No!" then I got her to say "Yes" to some other proposition. She looked as if she would have been more amusing if she could, since I so insisted upon it, but could not find any matter of interest in my discourse. At this moment a gentleman of her own age came and greeted her, with his mouth full of news. It was news they both liked excessively, though it related to nothing more than the merits of a groom who had been stable-boy at Mrs. Brown's, and who, she had felt convinced, was just the thing for Mr. Findon, and Mr. Findon had found her prophecy verified to the letter. The old horse had never looked so well, and the letters were always brought from the village half an hour earlier than they used to be. It was nothing to anybody else to be sure, but these two had found their very joy in it; and I, who would fain have been laughing and talking like the rest of the young people, was forced to find all my evening's arrangement in their own appropriated subject. They diversified it now and then, when the bright stars, Miss Aldbrooke and Mrs. Carey, floated past, by saying, "A sweet pretty creature, and then so *very* good tempered;" or "Well, there's one merit above all the rest in Mrs. Carey, I never did see her out of humour;" and "Is not she a beauty, Miss Buckwell — always merry and good-natured?"

I assented, thinking to myself, "Try her with some contempt and a good deal of neglect, as you all do me, and then say what she is;" but I said nothing of this; only fretted inwardly and smiled outwardly till Dr. Monkton thought proper to re-appear. He came back from his whist-table and from his excursions among his contemporaries and companions; and without reflecting on the

difference of our employments and tastes, said, in a tone which implied that he and I should look on it with the same philanthropy, "I hope you enjoy this scene as much as I do?" I said, "Yes," aloud, and to myself I said, "You cruel, unkind old Doctor, what right have you to ask me, a young girl, such a question?" Presently I told him, I thought that for one evening I had had amusement enough, and as he could not with any consistency propose to remain, he found the carriage, and we went away. I sate before the glass in my bed-room and cried a little. "But Gray is coming," I reflected. "Oh, Gray, I am clever and agreeable, and useful to you. Brother, friend, companion, don't let us ever be separate again; you are all I have in life, and having you, even I am going to be happy!"

CHAPTER V.

The old year had ended and the new year begun, ill. I was restless and uneasy; I was like a child in the dark, who longs, even to passion, to throw its arms round some friendly neck and feel itself safe. All the time I acknowledged that I should be half ashamed, when he did come back, of my own irritability and restlessness; but only as a thirsty man is of his thirst after he has drunk a full appeasing draught. I counted the days that remained of his absence, and set myself resolutely against receiving any more letters of delay to put off again my happiness. Nor did any come; there was no more obstacle, no more hindrance; the day remained fixed; there came only an assurance that he would be at home on the morrow at such an hour. All

was right now; Dr. Monkton got the same intelligence, and came over to Buckwell; he slept well that night, I believe; but *I* scarcely slept at all, and was up in the cold winter dawn, from mere inability to lie in bed.

"Good heavens, child," said he, keeping hold of my wrist when I shook hands with him, "at what a rate your pulse is going; why don't you keep quiet, and be rational?"

"So I will," said I, "as soon as Gray is come, but just now it is impossible."

"What sort of philosophy is that?" said Dr. Monkton, half smiling at the same time. "You could not bear — no, you could not bear not to see him now; by that I mean, that if so much pain were inflicted on you, it is true you could not avoid it, but you would endure it like a man on the rack, with shrieks and struggles instead of fortitude and submission."

"I will submit to everything," said I, "as soon as I am gratified; I will submit now, on condition of having nothing to submit to."

"Well, you have not long to wait," said he, looking at his watch; "he's probably at Firgrove now."

"Yes, no doubt," said I, looking through the country as far as I could see; "he's there, in that direction; very near, nearer now. Oh, I wonder how I could bear to think him hundreds of miles off so long?"

"Suppose you should get a letter to say he was in Germany still?"

"A letter!" and, looking him full in the face, the idea crossed me that, in fact, Dr. Monkton knew of some such catastrophe, and I stamped with impatience, and cried, "Then I will sit down and die."

Dr. Monkton laughed outright.

"Stand up and live, then," said he, "for I am not aware of any cause which should keep you from so doing;" and with that I was ashamed, and recovered my temper, which was too much bent upon one subject to bear being disturbed thus. The servants were in agitation like me, only of a different kind and degree; they were not accustomed yet to their master's absence, and this being his first return, each one in his department was anxious to please him. The park gates were open. The labourers drew together to give a cheer, reflecting, perhaps, that ale follows upon huzzaing; the women had made a great nosegay of chrysanthemums and other winter flowers from the green-house — their preparations irritated my impatience so that I could not sit still an instant; and if any one came in and said, "Do you think he will be here soon, Miss Katherine?" or, as they did at last, "It's past the hour, Miss Katherine; I wonder what keeps him!" I had hardly self-command enough not to cry for anger.

But in ten minutes more my pulse went down on a sudden — I was in Paradise; everybody was looking, but *I* saw the carriage first, and said nothing. In a few seconds they all saw it too, and cried out there he was. It came down the hill rapidly and presently entered the avenue which ran on high ground above the ravine containing the lake, and I heard the voices of the men shouting at a distance. I looked out with all my powers of eyesight, and very soon I saw, at the angle of the road, Gray himself, leaning out of the carriage and waving his hand. "I've seen him again! It is all right now!" I said to myself, and then I set off running with all my might, across a little path which cut off the angle of the carriage road, quite wild to throw my arms

round his neck, and feel him clasp me to his heart. I heard the carriage wheels coming on rapidly, but I was at the end of the cross-path before them. I could bear to wait one moment, because the next would end all. The next passed; there was a pause, a sort of suppressed sound of voices; then a violent noise; then there came, and rushed by me like a spectre, the horses without a driver, the carriage whirling past; they were out of the path; there was the pitch down to the lake before them. I saw Gray, whom I had not seen for four months, stretching forward, catching at the reins. It was all passed in a moment. All had come and gone — gone over the edge of the precipice!

CHAPTER VI.

In three weeks after that time everything had begun to move in its old order. The grave had closed, the earth was smoothed over it, and the outer world was unconscious of the event. The windows were thrown open; there was a bustle of setting things in order, as if some one had gone on a journey, and the disturbance made by the preparations were to be effaced. One room especially was exposed to the winds; the curtains were stripped away, and the windows opened early and closed late. I had not noticed the silence, but I observed the return of sound; before then I was abandoned and forsaken to despair, which it was indifferent to me that any one should sympathise with or not. I took it as a matter of course that all were feeling as I did, and had me in their heart to pity and respect. I did not care for their doing so. I did not direct a thought

towards them until I began to be conscious that there were other sentiments abroad, and even then I did not attend at first, or at least only with a momentary outbreak of scorn and pain. One day I heard voices in a low tone, while the work of the speakers was suspended, and distinguished that they were talking of their young master; and then I listened, believing I should hear the natural expressions of their affection — I was sure they loved him one-and-twenty days ago.

"I was dreaming of white linen only four nights before," said one. "It is a sign of something awful going to happen, and you see what it was."

"Ay, truly," said the other; "and then to think of the white gloves tearing that they put on his hands. Mrs. Coxon said at the time, young people never die so naturally as old people."

"She's used to see death," retorted the first speaker.

"Oh dear me! well, to be sure, what frail creatures we all are!"

"Ay, indeed," said her companion; and both resumed for a little while the employment they were about.

"Jane," said the first speaker, after a little while, "I can't think my bombazine is as fine as yours; it was off another piece, you know, for when they came to measure there was not enough by twenty yards, and Mr. Cartwright sent a man and horse back to Norden for more."

"Humph, I don't see much odds," said Jane. "It's very handsome mourning, all of it."

"Yes, it's very well. It's ten pounds in my way, one thing and another. Don't you think, Jane, there will be a month's wages at least over?"

"Oh, no doubt; it's always a month when the master dies; poor fellow, he'd not have grudged it, neither, if he had known!"

"Don't talk so loud, there's somebody will hear you."

"Well, I said no harm."

"No! but Mr. Tasebrook's very particular, they say, about everybody looking very respectful, and all that. For my part, I don't much care about engaging housemaid again here; things won't be so easy as they used."

"Well, as for me, I'd sooner stay than go; but nobody seems to be able to tell yet who's going to be master, or what's going to be done. To be sure, it will be Sir Richard in time, won't it?"

"Sir Richard! Who's that? Oh, old Mr. Buckwell, you mean! Lord, Jane, how pat you have his name;" and then there was a half-laugh, and Jane cried, "For shame!" and sighed again. "I wish," said she, resuming the dialogue, "I wish one could tell something. Miss Katherine ought to think of other people, poor thing! *She* must go soon, I suppose, and I wish she would bring it to mind, and speak about us, for it is *that* hinders old Sir Richard from settling with us all, I fancy."

So saying, they went on with their work, polishing the floor of the gallery. Miss Katherine did not stir a muscle for all she had heard. It was something new, but I was nearly dead to pain, at least, so far as outer signs go. I understood, indeed suddenly, how wholly detached from everybody and everything I stood, and that it was not they who were to think for me, but that it was I who was alone in the world, and every one had something dearer to which they would sacrifice me. My one friend was dust, and that was the idea the present dialogue set forth in new colours. I resolved

in a moment to act; nobody should wait for me; and, for the first time seeking the inmates of the house, I went boldly through the rooms which I had shrunk from entering, and had thought to go there as a great effort, nay, as a meritorious effort, some future day, when I should have strength, and when others should pity me for doing so. But I took the task boldly, nay, hard-heartedly now, and without knocking or asking admittance, turned the handle of my uncle's door, and went straight into his presence.

"My God, Katherine!" said he, rising hastily, and terrified almost at my appearance.

"Yes, it is I, uncle; are you busy — can't you speak to me — is anything the matter?"

"The matter! Oh, my poor child, how you talk! What brought you in this sudden way? Sit down — wait a moment;" and as he said so, I observed that he grew paler and paler, and his knees trembling, he sank on the chair behind him, and seemed as if he were about to faint. I ran to him, and opened the window, and leaned his head on my shoulder, holding his hands in mine, and waiting till he should recover his self-command. "Oh, Katherine!" said he, "you came too suddenly; I can't bear this yet. Oh, my poor child, think of our Gray!"

I fell down before him, and hid my face on his knee, and sobbed aloud; he bent his head over me, and wept bitterly.

"Don't cry, Katherine," said he, trying to draw away my hands from my face. "I did not mean to make you cry. You must forgive me, and so I tell James *he* must too; but I can't bear it so well as you young people." I got up and dried my tears, and stood by listening

while he went on. "People have been very kind to me, which made me feel your coming so suddenly. More, they have used me to a great deal of painstaking and consideration, and I have not said his dear name once yet, till I said it just now, Katherine. You startled me, and it came out of my heart at once. I am so sorry it made you cry, Katherine."

"Oh, no, no! it was not that made me cry. We won't talk about it. I came to say something to you before I go away, and when you have heard me this once, it will be all over, you know."

"Go away? And where should you go?" said he. "What are you talking about?"

"I don't know where I *should* go, but here I am not to stay."

"Why not? who says so? Have they said so to you? Nay, do sit down and listen to me, for you can't have so much to say to me as I have to you. I have been thinking of you so much, Katherine; and I should have come to you many times, for I could not bear you to be there all alone and so miserable; but James said I had better not. He said you would think I came to put myself in Gray's place; and as God knows whether that was not far enough from my heart, I could not judge whether you might think so or not. That was all my reason."

"Oh, I believe you; it never once entered my thoughts till now. I did not reflect that anybody could have thought about it."

"No, certainly; an old man like me, and a young girl like you, may be excused if we can't turn our heads to life and business so soon. It is very right, no doubt, for a man of education like James; but, indeed, Kathe-

rine, it does break my heart when he makes me talk about it!"

"Ah, dear uncle," said I, weeping again; "dear uncle, that is a kind, natural word — the first, the last, perhaps."

"Kind, do you call it?" said he. "Poor child, what does that mean? you will find everybody kind — you will want nobody's help. James says you are very well provided for; but I am glad you shake your head at that — it is not that, is it, which makes us happy? If we did but know when we are wishing, how to wish, and what to wish for! No doubt, if somebody had told me I should ever be rich, and by no fault of mine, I should have said it could not but be good, come how it would. Yet now, what is the use to me? Are not they all gone that would have enjoyed it, and would not I give all — yes, all — for one sparkle again of those joyful eyes of his who is the lawful owner?"

My uncle wrung his hands, and the tears trickled down his face while he spoke. It was the first time, perhaps, that he had been allowed to utter the natural and true feelings, of his affectionate heart since the change of his fortunes, and he did so freely. Still I could not bear him to set before me images, which, while they were cause of tears in him only, were to me such dreadful spectres, that when they were set out in words in this way, they had almost the effect which the reality had; and I made a struggle, and said, after a little while: "So now, uncle, hear me. I want to ask you to do many things for me, and I have not much time, you know."

But he stopped me. "Oh, my dear niece, how can I bear all that? Dear Katherine, won't you speak to

James about business, he understands it so well? — and if you would spare me, it would be real kindness to an old man."

"And who spares me?" I thought; but I did not reproach him.

Mr. Tasebrook was summoned, therefore — hard and rule-ridden as ever. He meant to do everything rightly, but it was a stiff and unnatural proceeding. He came in, with his white handkerchief spread wide over his hand, and lifted it to his eyes at what he thought the proper moments; his voice was pitched to the tone which he considered proper to represent grief, and he heaved great ostentatious sighs at intervals. I could not endure this. I turned away that I might not seem to remark his decorous affliction, and affected myself a commonplace, unmoved tone, at which at first he was embarrassed, and presently I think he began to conceive I was more hard-hearted than he had expected; and although he was half shocked at it, he took it well on the whole, because at least it spared him trouble. He heard all I had to ask, and I asked everything that was necessary, just as if we had been talking over the merest form of business.

I especially recollected the two servants, whose dialogue had so wounded me, preferring these to first places in Mr. Tasebrook's consideration. I stated at large all the plans for everybody's improvement which my brother and I had formed, and pretended to myself, as much as to my auditors, that I considered them now wholly independent of my co-operation, and that all I had to do was humbly to recommend them to the new possessors of authority.

But I found I did not know myself yet. Mr. Tase-

brook — who, in my secret heart, I had expected would assent to all this as a matter of course, because *I* asked it — put on an important face, and hesitated. I felt the blood rush into mine, and understood that while I had supposed myself showing such proud humility, I had, in fact, been humiliating myself by making requests which I had no right to prefer.

I turned involuntarily to my uncle, to save me from this shame, and grant them. He had been sitting by, silent, and tears at times had run over his cheeks, while I myself was talking of Gray. But I was as hard as a stone to my own sorrow, and that of everybody else.

"Everything shall be as you wish," said he, hastily, when I looked towards him; and then he hesitated, and cast his eyes upon his son-in-law, as if he were inquiring whether he might say so; "that is," said he, "everything consistent with the interest of the poor little girl you know, Katherine."

Mr. Tasebrook cleared his voice, and getting rid of responsibility himself, said, "Nay, decide wholly for yourself, Sir Richard....." But my uncle got up suddenly, at hearing this title addressed to him, his pale face flushing like crimson, and in a low voice he ejaculated, "Fie, James, and my niece in the room, too!"

This interview had disturbed all the feelings with which I had still regarded Buckwell. It had deprived it of the character of my home, and had made me feel that I was a stranger in my native place. And yet it was the same scene, the same friendly aspect, the same mute domestic rooms and halls. The least sounds and sights that were familiar gave me the pain of thinking I should hear and see them no more. The crackling of

the wood fire in the hall, which every now and then made itself heard through the open doors; the sound of the clock, quietly telling the seconds; the great marble wreaths on the chimneypiece; the various objects of luxury and security, in which there was no thought of death and suffering; and in the park was the herd feeding on the fodder which was being strewed for them; the swans pluming themselves by the water; the hundred customary things. A little while since, I sate here with no thought of change; now I was on the eve of an everlasting separation. I must prepare to go; and whatever belonged to Buckwell was something foreign to me; all that was done about it, all that was coming to it, referred to others. When summer came it was they who would be enjoying the trees and flowers; and I meantime, far away, should be thinking of a place and people who did not think of me. "The spot we ne'er forget, though there we are forgot." I was not the lawful child of the family, and people seemed to forget that I had a whole heart here, and not one tie anywhere else. A few old people shed tears to think of parting with poor Miss Katherine, but the most part were glad, like Mr. Tasebrook, that I had plenty of money, and thought it was but quitting one dwelling-place for another.

"And where are some to judge better, and to feel more kindly," thought I; "some one friend to feel for me what I have lost? Are there no thoughts left, but of wealth and business, none of those to whom I have done kindness to do some little kindness to me?" Alas! nobody came; they feared to embarrass themselves perhaps with the sight of grief which is indeed uneasy to witness, if the wish to heal it be not stronger than such

embarrassment. Some wrote me word they would not intrude, but I must know how much they sympathised with me; some that my own good feelings would be my best support; some left their names, and if they could do anything for me, I should send for them. Alas! why did they wait to be sent for? I made all my preparations alone. The worst was when I came to see how a hundred objects were become superfluous to the house, which used to belong to its most intimate habits. All those which had got their place through the custom of a life spent there, and which were necessary to our old ways of passing time, or which were the marks of how it had been passed, were now fit only to be cast away by a new possessor. They were sacred only to me in the world, and I went to collect them, before I should go away, and they become mere lumber.

The room where we had sate together remained just as if we were going to be there again; there was a fire on the hearth burning cheerfully, and the two great chairs, with a table beside each, were set on either side. On mine there lay a book with the mark which I had put in, to show Gray a passage in it when he should return. I recollected in an instant how I had expected he would smile at it, and how I would urge it against him in favour of some conceit of my own at which he used to laugh. I tore out the mark. But I went straight on, and opened the drawers of the tables, emptied the desks, shook the portfolios, and dared to see all the casual records of mirth or employment, or careless idleness which fell from them. There were letters, words of his living thoughts, speaking as if life and consciousness were present still; there were the gay and bold expressions of life and its projects; the careless

allusion; the whimsical plan; the daily adventure. Over these had fallen the gloomy silence of the grave, as if death had come to reprove with undue sternness the innocent gaiety of our hearts. He had quenched the free smile, he had exposed before the gaze of all the change he had wrought in the once pliant limb and joyful eye. Had there been the least harm in all this mirth? and yet what stern treatment of it! We should never smile more; no, death had done his will; but we did not know that those years of joy were to be thus sternly quenched.

The weather, meantime, was bright and splendid. It was mid-winter, but the sun glistened over the country. A little snow lay on the ground, but the sky was cloudless, and the day even warm, so that the large windows had been thrown open, and a tide of light and air flowed in through them. I did not shut it out, for my grief seemed to be despised by the reviving year: there was no gloom answering to mine, no darkness except in that grave. But I could not go forth into the day and "partake its rejoicing with heaven and earth." My heart was silently gathered into its own grief. I collected the poor things which had survived him, and which had no value in the world except being his; and when I had laid them on the table, I put my arms round them, and for want of the face I had kissed so often, kissed these few relics, and thought how all that remained to me of kindness and gladness was dwindled even to a useless key and a faded ribbon.

While I was thus occupied, a servant came into the room with a message from old Rooke. He was ill and wanted to see me; he had sent for me, and his daughter was below waiting to let me know. I answered, with-

out turning round, that the servant might not see my tears, and with few words, for I could not command my voice for more. I promised to go, but the glittering day, and the dislike to meeting with any one, induced me to delay a few hours, especially as I did not understand Rooke's message to be very pressing. I waited, therefore, and finished some more of the preparations I had to make for my departure, and it was not till dusk that I set out for Rooke's cottage. The clear day had departed; the walks were frozen hard, and everything, though silent and motionless, seemed intensely alive under the severe forming of the frost. It was not rest, but gloomy suffering; at least so it seemed to me as I went for the last time perhaps through the walks of so many seasons and scenes. There was no beauty in them now, no sound of bird or voice; they were all stretched out around me as in the best summer days, but hidden by the darkness except a few yards before and behind just were I was moving. How was it that I was come to this very *now?* and that it would not change to the former thoughts and things which seemed the fixed habits of life? Where was my brother; where were our childish days; where was our long walk, our loud laugh, our careless talk, our Sabbath evening?

I came in my way to a small pool of water, round which some trees had been felled to make more space for the green sward next summer, and I sat down on one of these by the water's edge, for my heart was too full to go on. The water was frozen, and the dark trees hung motionless over it, while no sound was heard except the quick dropping of a little spring which fed it at the upper end. At intervals, too, the village clock struck the quarters of the hour, and they came with a

melancholy sound, loud and distinct upon the air, as in a hard winter's frost. Behind me, at a distance, was the house wherein I fancied the blazing hearth, and contrasted it with the gloomy scene which this night I liked better than its solitary warmth. I had no heart for cherishing life, as one loves to do in peace and ease. I would gladly have stayed here and died, and I thought while I looked at the frozen surface at my feet, that if the will of another would come and force me in, all would be peace; and then I began to muse why I was forbidden myself to enter the world of spirits. But a very little thing seemed to break the loose thread of thought; a bird moved on one of the hanging boughs, and a shower of white frost rustled for two or three seconds among the branches below; I looked at it and forgot to reason, and brooded again listlessly over the confused images with which my mind was filled.

"Most miserable!" I said to myself; and then thought loosely brought in the other words attached to those words, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Yes, the wise apostle knows that we suffer here — suffer, oh, God, how much! — all is for the worst *here*. I know that I suffer; if in this life only I have hope, I am miserable. But I am immortal, I have to use my sorrow — oh, would it were still the trial of happiness I had to use! Gray! happiness! Never, never can *they* come again. Then I will lay hold of sorrow, and make it my servant. Yes, I am immortal — I am redeemed — I am too noble a creature to despair. Now then, I'll get up and go on again.

Thought had been turned into a better channel — a good influence had pointed it that way. I rose and

went forward along the path that led from the water, and came in sight before long of Rooke's cottage. When I entered and went up to the old man, I was struck with the change that had come over him since I saw him before. He was ill and broken-hearted.

"You are come at last, Miss Katherine," said he; "you should have come before. I sent for you."

"Only to-day, Rooke," said I; "and indeed I've not been out of the house till now."

"Why not?" said old Rooke. "They tell me you bear it better than I do."

"Yet I have lost more," said I; "all!"

"Ay, it has struck me my death-blow," said Rooke. "Poor fellow, dear fellow!" he continued, wringing his old hands together; "the old man will be true to you, let who will do you wrong."

"What can you mean, Rooke?" said I; "*you* should have pity on me at least."

"You don't want pity, Miss Katherine," said he. "Did not they tell me you were in his very room, looking over his very things, when I sent to you? And when it was for *his* sake I sent to you!" continued he. "There are such villains come to me here about him; you ought to have heard about it before." And with that the old man began to tell me such improbable tales of questions put to him by strangers, about Gray, that I thought his mind was wandering.

I looked at his daughter, who was standing near, to know whether it was not so, but she confirmed everything. "No, indeed, Miss Katherine, it is all true he says, and they did run on so, that my father, for as weak as he is, got up on his feet, and threatened them to the best of his power to turn them out of the house."

"Ay, I did," said Rooke, trembling with indignation; "but they went off then, or I should have burst my heart at them. And at every base word they said, still it was, 'You know it was so; it was this way you know very well;' and at the last, when I told them that such a gentleman was never such a man before — grand of name, grand of health and goodness, all alike, 'Ay,' says they, 'his sister's been tutoring you,' I was all of a fire to hear them dare name such a thing."

"Never mind what they say of me," cried I, all shuddering with anger and wonder; "only tell me who it is, and where to find them."

"You may well be angry," said Rooke, looking at me; "and you must do something immediately, for Sarah tells me it's the same everywhere all over the village. There's not the blackguard in the place they don't go to; and got gipsy Jones last night into the very pot-house, and there sat drinking with him, and making him tell tale upon tale, all which they set down on paper before his eyes. You know if Jones would say anything — a man revengeful ever since he was tried by Sir Gray for that poaching business."

"Are you sure, Rooke?" said I, wholly unable to comprehend what I heard. "What can be the motive? They want to extort money, perhaps."

"That's very likely," said Rooke, "and therefore nothing stops them — not the very grave. Your noble father and his dear lady, that have been holy dust so long, the villains would have disturbed them all, and shown them to be sick of body and mind too. Oh, Miss Katherine, Miss Katherine! why was not I taken long ago?" The old man fell into a passion of tears, which shook his frame so, that it seemed as if it would have

killed him; and although I could not but believe he had exaggerated something which had occurred, yet it was plain from the effect it had on him, that there was only too much foundation for his story.

There was no occasion to promise Rooke that I would exert myself. It was my own business, and I went back from his cottage thinking only how to discover and punish the aggressors. I learned nothing but what increased my wonder. It was very true I found that some persons were actually engaged in attempting to libel the character of my brother, but by such strange imputations, that it seemed evident that what they aimed at was not the truth, but profit by a lie. They appeared to be of the lowest species of libellers, seeking their information from sources where whatever they themselves pleased to assert would be confirmed, in hopes of receiving half-a-crown, and carefully avoiding all the facts which could not but occasionally escape from even these people, when they tended to overthrow their own stories. They went near no private friend, no gentleman; they had prowled about the house, and being indignantly received by the servants, as in the case of Rooke, had blustered a little, declaring all that was truly asserted to be perjury, and then gone in search of perjuries which they declared to be truths.

The natural conclusion was, that they were men living on the basest means which the world furnished, and that when they heard of the extinction of a young and noble life, their first idea was to make it profitable to themselves by inventing tales of slander, which they should either be paid for repressing, or make money by propagating. I could conceive nothing else, and not knowing how to proceed, so as to show the contempt

they inspired, and yet authoritatively to stop them, I sent a message to Dr. Monkton, and asked him if he would come and speak to me. He had been several times at the house; he had inquired after me, but as yet he had not seen me. I could understand this. His pride, his occupation, his comfort, were all gone with Gray. Here was an event without remedy, without warning, one he could never have anticipated, which cut short all his own projects, and disturbed all his habits. I could conceive that he would, from custom and from pride, resort to his old stoical maxims, but those would fail to touch the inner mortification, which every movement would make him feel. My sorrow would need comfort, and he would have no heart nor courage, though he should be forced by his principles to give consolation of a kind he could not feel.

"I should have come to-day or to-morrow, Katherine, if you had not sent for me," said he, when he came in. "How d'ye do? Well, child, well," he continued, in a tone as if it were I who was to blame for the weakness which was overcoming himself, "you must bear it all, you know;" and with these words he turned away his face, and I heard a few deep sobs tear his bosom.

"Oh, my dear Dr. Monkton!" cried I, throwing my arms round his neck, "weep for him — let me weep; it does us good."

"No, no; it does no good," said he, disengaging my arms, and struggling with his emotion; "it is all past. What good can regret do? it can't move the irremediable past!"

"Alas, alas!" I said, bitterly wringing my hands — but he stopped me.

"No, don't do that; you were calm enough when I

came in. What have I done to you to make you unhappy? Was it that you sent to me for? What did you want, Katherine?"

I tried to regain my self-command, and then began to relate to Dr. Monkton the calumnies I had heard, but to my surprise Dr. Monkton listened peevishly, and would have me convince myself that the reports were not worth attending to. "Idle tales," said he, "idle tales! How can you trouble yourself about them, child? I see nothing in them, for my part, but a pack of nonsense which the women have brought to you."

I told him from whom I heard them.

"Pshaw!" said Dr. Monkton; "I did not exactly mean it was the women perhaps; but generally they are things not to be credited, not to be attended to."

"Nay, but they must be attended to," said I, laying my hand boldly on his arm, "if Gray's name is attacked by them."

"Yes, yes, Katherine; you speak out, and well; but don't you see that you must not listen to such things or you give them countenance; in short, don't listen, child, it will all go off in a day or two — of course it will."

He would not have me say more on the subject. I could not understand his apathy to it; but I found that, at all events, it was not *he* who would assist me. He turned the conversation to me.

"And so, Katherine, I hear you are going," said he. "Where is it to be?" But, before I could answer, he went on — "I hope you will come to see me, but just at present I am not going to be at home; and unless one was always at home, I suppose it would not be convenient, indeed perhaps it would not be proper for a young girl like you to make your constant residence at

my house; otherwise, I was thinking, perhaps, you had entertained the idea of some such thing."

Dr. Monkton spoke very ungraciously, as though a sense of duty urged him to offer me his home, but as though he had been picturing to himself how much I should be in his way. I hastened to tell him no such idea had crossed my mind; which was not, however, quite true, for since I had been obliged to think on the subject, it had occurred to me once or twice that as the worst of expedients I might be sure of a home with Dr. Monkton. It seemed that he, meantime, had been considering whether, as the highest effort of benevolence, he should offer one to me.

"Well, I believe you are right," said he; "I shall be able to be of more use to you in other ways; though tell me, first, what it is you intend. To go to London, I suppose?"

"Why London?"

"Nay," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "I conclude you won't like to remain near this place; you could not bear to see it belonging to another, no doubt. You will get away from this place, of course?"

"I don't know," said I, feeling the colour mount in my face, and yet venturing to speak out what I thought he would despise; "that may be very well for happier people than I, but I had rather stay somewhere where I could see the place, and be among the people which belonged to Gray, and where I have been very happy, than go where nothing will care for me."

"Katherine," said Dr. Monkton, "you have spoken wisely, you are a sensible being; quite right, poor dear child, except that you make yourself cry by putting into

words what you must have had in your thoughts without crying. I entirely approve you."

"Well, then," said I, trying with all my might to smile, "will you help me think of some place where I can go?"

Dr. Monkton was willing to give me all the assistance in his power in this way. I believe the assurance that his daily kindnesses would not be wanted made him prompt to offer and enforce services which should cost him but one effort. After some consideration, he proposed to me that I should endeavour to occupy part of an old house, about three miles from Buckwell, which was interesting to us from its picturesque appearance, and its history. It was too large for the farmer who rented it, and there was a portion nearly detached from the main building, which stood out in a garden, where Dr. Monkton thought I might very well find a habitation. I was not unwilling to try, and when he insisted upon it that I should accompany him on the instant to look at it, I assented, for I was unused to oppose him.

We set out accordingly, and slowly made our way by many a well-known path towards the house which I had formerly visited under such different circumstances. It had once been the residence of a younger son of the family, and, with a certain quantity of land, had been detached from the estate as his portion. It was built for him as long ago as the latter part of Edward VI.'s reign, so that what had been his new dwelling was now the old house — its shape antiquated, and its walls time-worn. He had had his full share of human troubles; he had conformed to the Roman Catholic faith under Mary, for which he was persecuted in the next reign, and the fines which had been imposed upon him had reduced his

fortunes so much that the house he had built for his estate soon stood there too big for what estate was left. But he suffered worse trouble than that — it became too big also for its inhabitants. He had come there a happy man, with wife and children, and, not very long after, death had carried away all his dear ones. Sorrow and poverty both urged him; he sold the land that remained, and the house he had built, back to the possessor of Buckwell; and in the restlessness of unhappiness, he engaged in one of the many plots against Elizabeth. This swept away the last wreck of his fortunes, and having nothing now, any more than when he was a boy at Buckwell, having moreover left *behind* all the field of life which then lay *before* him, he returned to his old dwelling, and begging a room there, rested awhile and died. He was so unhappy that he wished his name to be forgotten, and yet he had so longed to be happy, that he could not reconcile himself to be treated like mere dust of the earth. He entreated, therefore, to be buried within the walls of the church, not in an unsheltered grave; but he would not be placed in the chancel of his family, and chose to lie in the common aisle, where the feet of every one passed and repassed. This had been arranged long before he died; but in his last illness, when death was plainly drawing nigh, he contrived to scrawl a few words on a paper, which he kept afterwards under his pillow, and of which these were found to be the contents — "I leave ten shillings, which lie in the right hand pigeon drawer, for a flat stone to lie over me. Engrave no name; I forbid it. Write this only — 'And he asked for himself that he might die; and he said, Lord God, it is enough.'"

The consequence of this order to forget him, and of

this singularity in his mode of burial, was, that he continued better known, and his place better defined than that of almost any of the occupants of the family burial place. Though not written on the stone, his name was recorded in a leaf of the family bible; and whenever the chancel was to be shown to a stranger, one of the principal objects was the grave of "poor Mr. Sydney Buckwell." His house had long since ceased to bear any marks of him. What remained of it had degenerated to a mere farm, quiet and lonely. I was contented that this should be my dwelling. I was willing to go anywhere so that it was not far off, and, at all events, in moving here I might cheat my fancy, and tell myself I was not leaving Buckwell for the last time, but might promise myself one other visit to take leave, even though that visit should never come.

Dr. Monkton interested himself in the details; he became busy and occupied; and, having no courage to engage in them, I went away into the little desolate garden, which at all times was disorderly and wild, but now, in the winter season, was doubly dreary.

While I stood there, silently and sadly, the sound of footsteps approaching did not at first attract my attention further than to make me turn away to avoid observation. But I found they pursued me, and, on turning round, saw it was the farmer belonging to the place, and a stranger with him, whose silver chain, over a black silk waistcoat, and gold studs fastening his shirt, seemed to belong to some finer place and society than that of our country neighbourhood. He stepped jauntily along, beating his boot every moment with a walking cane, and wore an air of unconcern, which was strongly contrasted

by the perplexed and half-angry visage of the farmer. The latter, coming up to me, stopped and said —

"I'm glad you chance to be here, Miss Katherine, for this gentleman, Mr. Brutman is his name, ma'am, is in want of knowledge which I can't give him nohow, forasmuch as I don't know the matter he wants; *that* you can tell better than I," and he seemed thankful to be getting rid of a responsibility which alarmed him.

"Nay," said the gentleman, "it is not a matter that requires much consideration; it is merely a little fact I happen to be acquainted with, and of which I wish to hear this honest man's account, but if it is to be yours, ma'am, it is all the same to me."

"But you should have mine and welcome," said the farmer, "only you unsay my say all the way as I say it, and what can I do more than tell as I know, whether it's law or no law?"

"Nay," said the other, "truth is all I want, but that is what I do not get from you."

"What is it, in short?" said I, not much disposed to listen to this altercation.

"Why, in short, ma'am, as you well observe," said the gentleman, "you will remember I am told a scene which occurred not far from this spot — a scene belonging to the life of the late Sir Gray, poor young gentleman! I am sure I'm concerned when I think of it all."

"Well, sir."

"Well, ma'am, you know it is of no use concealing those sort of things, and indeed they're not to be concealed, being too generally known."

"That's what I say they are *not*," said the farmer; "being unknown to anybody till this day."

"This lady won't say the same?" suggested our querist. "Do you remember, ma'am, anything of an occurrence where the hereditary malady of poor Sir Gray strongly showed itself — a wild act — hushed up at the time — attempt on the life of one Peter Jones; fortunately the man's donkey received the shot. I've his evidence here, if you like to hear it."

"What, it is you, sir, is it?" I cried, with the most vehement passion I ever had yet endured. "It is you who dare to call in question the character of my brother? Leave the place, sir, leave the place!" I cried, choking with passion, and unable to get out words, when, but for being a woman, I would have proceeded at once to deeds.

"Your brother!" cried the informer, starting back a few paces. "Oh, your brother?"

"To be sure," said the farmer; "I told you it was Miss Katherine."

"How could I tell who Miss Katherine was? but if that's the case, of course I shan't hear the truth here."

"How, sir, the truth?" cried I.

"Oh, no, ma'am, excuse me. I understand it perfectly now. And this honest man is a tenant, perhaps — under influence — oh, exactly — I perceive it all."

During this time he was retreating; the greatest scorn, the greatest passion, the greatest desire to confound him possessed me. I ran after him, but he retreated the more hastily, and while I even laid my hand on him to hold him fast, he leaped on horseback, and was presently at a distance.

I came back in search of Dr. Monkton, and related all that had passed; still he was unaccountably im-

penetrable to it; he became angry even, he authoritatively silenced me, and wanted on his part to interest me in details of the house and of my future plans, which had ceased to give me any concern.

"But it is not that I care for now, Dr. Monkton," I said, returning to the subject; "it is not my own fortunes I care about. I dare say all that will do well enough."

"Fine talking," said he, contemptuously; "but it will not do for practice, Katherine — you must learn to *care* for fortune, whatever you *think* about it. I only hope, poor child, you will have some to care about."

I heard Dr. Monkton, but did not heed him; I was occupied with only one subject, and since he would not try to satisfy me on that, I paid no more attention to him, and was concerned only in the thought how to acquire information, and whom to interest to give it. The best person to whom to apply seemed to be Mr. Carey, and the next morning, very early, I set out alone in search of him, hoping to reach his house by the end of his usual breakfast hour. I depended on finding him alone, and asking merely whether he was at home, followed the servant into the sitting-room, my heart beating very hard, and the tears rushing to my eyes at the thought of seeing old friends under such altered circumstances. But I was not prepared for the scene I found. The room was full of people, just risen I suppose from breakfast, and by chance they were at the moment eagerly discussing some adventure or some scheme, and laughing with hearty good will. Mrs. Carey, and I saw it at a glance, was addressing her conversation to one of the party, confidentially and smilingly, as she used to do to Gray. Mr. Carey, our own friend, was standing

in the midst, and as I came in, and he turned to see for whom the door was opened, he was laughing, and it was the first expression of his face that caught my eye. I and they all were confounded. If a spectre had come in with pale face and mourning habit, there could not have been a more sudden silence, and I did not move nor speak at first. The pause lasted but a few seconds, long though it seemed. Mrs. Carey rose, and beautiful as she was, adorned with the finest luxury of dress, blooming and delicate, it seemed as though the sight of adversity and humiliation frightened her, and while she was willing to advance to Katherine Buckwell, she was oppressed and terrified by a sense of something supernatural, which made her hang back.

I recovered my voice, and said — "I did not mean to trouble you; I thought I could have spoken a word."

"Trouble!" cried Mr. Carey, coming quickly forward; "can you say that? Is there anything I can do; speak on, my dear Katherine," and so saying, he pressed my hand warmly between both his. But I would not believe in sympathy, after seeing the unprepared scene, and leaving my hand passively in his till he let it go, answered coldly, that when he was not busy I should be glad to speak to him.

"How can I be busy, if you want me?" said Mr. Carey. "Come with me, pray," and so saying, he opened the door which led to the library, where he generally sate, and took me hastily from the assembled party. I would have begun on my business at once, but he stopped me.

"No, Katherine, don't treat me so," he said; "you must not be angry, or think ill of me, because you found me in company, and not thinking of Gray. It would not

be just to me, nor fair to yourself; for it gives *you* some pain, as well as me a great deal."

"No, I have learned to expect it. It is a whole month now."

"Don't say that, with the meaning you give it, at least. A month is a very little while to forget him in, but it is not a little while for a man, Katherine, to resume his customary habits. It is as natural to do that in a month, as never to forget Gray while life lasts."

I shook my head, but I did not speak, for I felt my voice would have failed me.

"It would not be natural for *you* to take interest in anything else — but be just, Katherine. If you see me, when not expecting you, and without affectation, sharing in the excitement of the present moment, you can the better believe how without affectation, and with all the sincerity of a man's heart, I think of Gray, and feel what I have lost in him."

"Besides," I said, "why *should* I expect it? it is *I* who have lost more than any can tell."

"Yes, more than any *can* tell," said Mr. Carey, taking hold of my hand. "One who was your pride, as well as your treasure; one who did such unostentatious good, who was such a frank companion, such a sure friend, such an honest and upright citizen of this world."

"Oh, yes, all that — you speak the very truth; you don't forget him, though it might seem so!" I cried. "You speak calmly, Mr. Carey; you speak from deep conviction, and that is best for a man, as you say," and quite overthrown myself, I hid my face, and shed torrents of tears.

And now I opened my heart, and told him all that

I had heard. Mr. Carey was not surprised; he was already aware of it all, and he only lamented that it should have reached my ears. He said he could explain, but how to prevent it he did not know. "Alas! Katherine, it is no speculating ruffian, no vagabond who could be authoritatively silenced; it is worse than that."

"What, then? Do speak, and tell me all; there can be nothing worse than I know?"

"Don't you remember your poor uncle's scruples and doubts about the questions of the insurance offices, which we so laughed at?"

"Yes, yes, I remember it all."

"And can you conceive it possible that the affirmative of those very questions is now maintained by the offices?"

"No, that's quite impossible," said I. "They said themselves that they were fully satisfied. You are wrongly informed, you have not found out the secret yet."

"Indeed it is so. Dr. Monkton knows all, as well as I do, but he wants to persuade himself that there is no danger in it, and will not hear nor speak upon it."

"And what danger is there? I don't understand you yet."

"The danger is, that they should proceed to prove publicly what they are endeavouring to assert. They say, Katherine — you know in part what they say, for it was no doubt the agent of one of the offices, Brutman, who came to you at the old house — you yourself know what that man inquired from you and from others."

"What does a lie signify? it is cruel, but it is a lie!"

"Yes," said Mr. Carey; "and yet suppose he should find some one to swear it is truth?"

"I don't think so ill of people as to believe they would. Besides, whose interest is it?"

"Nay, it is the interest of the offices not to pay a large sum for which they have not received much consideration; on the other hand, to be sure, it is their interest not to alarm their other creditors by bringing false accusations against one who has trusted them."

"Then they will end by ascertaining and acknowledging the truth?"

"If so, we are safe," said Mr. Carey; "and indeed, a dispute so very rarely arises with the offices, that it is hardly credible that in so true a case as this, they can refuse to fulfil their agreement." He added much more on the subject, and bade me apply to Mr. Tasebrook, for advice how to act, as he could not but be acquainted with the proceedings of these persons.

I was in too high a fever of irritation and anxiety to pause; and therefore, as soon as I quitted Mr. Carey, I went straight home, and found, and explained to Mr. Tasebrook all that I knew. He listened with attention, and then, slapping his thigh, exclaimed —

"I declare it looks very awkward for the creditors of the offices — I'm heartily glad I'm not one of them. But *you* are, to be sure, Miss Katherine. I beg your pardon."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of the result," I said, coldly enough.

"Are not you? well, in your place I should be. Do you know their interest is so great in disbelieving the truth, and believing the untruth, that obliquity of vision is not unlikely to be generated by fiction of self-concern."

"Facts," said I, "are not so easily made and unmade. Besides, Mr. Carey says their interest is to discern the truth."

"Yes, certainly, as a general rule; but there may be cases in which the rule fails, and then interest gravitates to the generation of falsity."

"I can't think that," said I. "Exceptions, you know, prove a rule, and if they have one by which they gain on the whole, it must apply to all cases."

"An equilateral proposition," said Mr. Tasebrook. "Yet consider the temptation. So *many*, *many* thousands advanced, and not half a year's interest on them paid. They want, they pant, to believe those thousands their own; they would be out of their cold sweat if you and Lockfield would even be brought to say, We'll take half. Do you cognosce?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean — that though they would be unwilling to make their doubt a subject of public trial, they would be thankful to find them true enough to make it rather noble in them to pay, and quite prudent in you to accept, a quiet portion of their debt."

"And that I'll die sooner than do," cried I, starting up, and shuddering all over. "Confess those lies to be truth! what are you thinking of?"

"Oh! you take it quite wrongly. Call it a compromise, and you'll have a totally different view of the case."

"Not I — the two words make but one idea; and if it goes on that ground, I say quietly and truly, I would die before I listened to them."

"You are not the only person concerned," said Mr. Tasebrook.

"Who else?"

"There's Lockfield."

"I'll pay him all I have," said I.

"Ay, ay; as people say, I'll give the world for something or other — but have they got the world to give? Have you got so many thousands?"

"No."

"There it is, then."

"What is there, what do you know, what has he done?"

"I know exactly nothing at all," said Mr. Tasebrook.

"Then I beseech you find out for me. Write to him, he is *your* friend, and you must help me in this one last, first interest."

"Oh, I'll do that, and more," said Mr. Tasebrook; "much more for *you*. Don't you listen to what people say — don't let them hurry you away from the place. Take your own time, watch your own occasions. I shall never think you in the way, upon my solemn word."

Take my time? why should I take my time? ay, true, I had to go. It was time, indeed, that I should be going, when I could be told to take my time. And I *would* go quickly — but where? the thing which had become known to me, shook down the last ruin of the years gone by, for if it was true that I should with difficulty even find means to defend my lost brother's name and fame, the hope of a dwelling for myself, such as I had thought of in the Newholm, was gone. Yet I yearned to the plan, and thought better and better of it as it became less certain. I saw all the gloominess of prospect which it had hidden; all the wanderings, the vain longings for familiar scenes and familiar faces which there would be in a distant place; and I should have

been glad now to be assured of that dwelling which a short time ago I had looked upon with indifference.

Time, however, went by, stealing away the days, and too soon I reached the end of the last week that I must remain at Buckwell; and the last Sunday came round that I should ever see in this house. I heard the church bells beginning to ring; I had heard them for years, but never like this — all was changing for me — but *they* were the same, and, alas! for that sight or sound which will remain in its old place, though we shall never hear it again. I sate down against the window, looking at the church; there was nobody stirring; the groups which had been winding up to it were all gone in; there was the silence of the Sabbath all around.

Meekly, and under the influence of the day, at its holiest hour, I sate and began to read, though my eyes would wander off to the scene before me, which had been mine for so many years, and of which I was come almost to the last hour. I looked at it, and the thoughts of the past came with every tree and glade — thoughts, at this moment, subdued and chastened; and when, by long involuntary looking, the tears overflowed in my eyes, the influence of the day made me turn them back to the book in my hand, and try to read again, and to forget that I had suffered myself to be carried away so far.

While I was thus employed, I heard, very unwillingly, a step ascending the stair, and at last a knock, in both of which I recognized Mr. Tasebrook. I went to open the door for him, for I was quiet and submissive at this moment, and I did not want to be grieved and irritated, and made angry with myself for being so, just at this moment. It was kind of him to

concern himself for me, so I said to myself; and I invited him to sit down.

"You're reading, I see, Miss Katherine," said he, taking up my book; "oh, very good, very proper, I'm sure. If I'd thought of it, I would have gone to church; for one ought to give an example of that sort of thing. I am sure the people are much obliged to you for being so regular, while you were a pattern to them."

"But to-day I am no pattern, so I stay at home — do you mean that?" said I, trying to look very merry. "However, never mind that matter; at all events, by remaining here, I have secured the opportunity of hearing what you have to say — so, now, what is it?"

"Why," said Mr. Tasebrook, bringing out his handkerchief, "nothing good, I'm sorry to say."

"Ha! nothing good? What, is this Brutman believed, then?"

"Too much so, I'm sorry to say. Lockfield is in very great difficulty."

"Nay, he is wrong; with the truth on his side, what does he fear?"

"Truth is nothing at all," said Mr. Tasebrook. "Come, come, I must tell you at once;" and, so saying, he unfolded a letter which he had that morning received, and which came from Mr. Lockfield himself. "By some means or other," said he, "but by what I am unable to say, my unfortunate friend has ascertained that his and your antagonists have agreed among themselves to unite in their opposition to your claim. The antagonism of interested power collapses upon misinterpreted ingenuousness; that is, in other words....."

"I understand," cried I; "never mind other words. What have they done?"

"What we should have thought a chimera dire and many-headed impossibility," said he, "five weeks ago. *You* know, and *I* know what was truth then. We *know;* we never thought of *proving;* but to prove *that* a false assertion now, which was undisputed truth so few weeks since, your powerful adversaries have subscribed £3,290 12*s.* 2*d.*, being about 8 per cent. in proportion to their liabilities. Now, you two, Lockfield and you, what have you got to fight them with?"

"The truth," said I.

"Ay, the naked truth," said Mr. Tasebrook, laughing; "for they have got the goddess's habiliments — excuse me — your money, in their own hands."

"And is that possible?" cried I; "is that permitted? Can such oppression be carried on?"

"It's not oppression," said Mr. Tasebrook; "they don't think it injustice. Of course, there are things to be said, and facts that can be made to prove them on all sides of every question. Why, now, if I asked you to demonstrate to me that you were alive, you would be puzzled to do it."

"No, I should not; because men agree to call living actions, life; but you mean something more terrible than that — you mean that what the grave hides has no longer a testimony of its own, to set forth its own truth."

"Therein," said Mr. Tasebrook, "veracity bound itself to exactitude. Definition hands forward the circumstance."

"Don't talk so," I said; "what we want, yes, these offices and all, I sincerely believe is to make the truth known, and that's all."

"Lockfield's like you," said Mr. Tasebrook; "he

fancies it might do good. Indeed, that's some of my business with you. If you please, you shall give me a few facts, and such documents as you have, which may help in drawing up the case. We'll try if a case can be made out."

"How can you use such a word as that? If a case can be made out!"

"Well, all I mean is, that immensely rich people are led by their interest to believe and prove one thing, and immensely poor ones, poor except in a great provision of naked truths, will have up-hill work to prove the other; however, as I say, it's no concern of mine."

Mr. Tasebrook now, in a very methodical manner, began taking my examination, and making memoranda. I bore it all bravely enough, and the more so because I saw that, although he now and then made a formal and businesslike recurrence to feeling, and regret, and fine epithets, he had not one particle of consciousness as to the pain he gave. I answered every question, recalled every date, and noted all past pleasures and remembrances as though they had been merely useful means of gaining a law-suit; domestic habits, which were never meant for a stranger's eye, I exposed to his, to be stored up as instruments of legal defence. I brought out, for his inspection, the letters I had lain by from time to time, and now they were docketted and put up among the materials for a case. While I did all this, there seemed to come a numbness over me, so that even the cold-hearted Mr. Tasebrook shrank from expressions which I used, and avoided details which I related. I went through the whole task as if my heart had been stone. The only thing I could *not* do, was to return the expressions of grief with which Mr. Tasebrook closed the

interview. I answered him nothing, and even when he was gone, the numbness lasted still, and I went on under the same impulse putting away the boxes, tying up the diminished bundles of letters, and closing the ransacked drawers. Then I took a book of prayer, and kneeled down mechanically, but when I did so, and had time, and was in a presence where, so to speak, it was allowed me to feel, all that unnatural strain gave way at once. I suddenly recollected how *here* I should never be more, and how the last hope had been destroyed since I had communed with myself before, of lingering near the blessed scenes. I remembered how honour, love, and happiness were suddenly withered around me, and how I was about to go alone into an unkind world where my first task was to defend, with how weak an arm! the name which had been my glory and protection. Had these walls ever seen a Sabbath evening like this? Was this the last of all those Sabbaths which had been so holy and happy here? alas! it was almost run to the very end. Oh! let me bid it a better farewell than this, for I shall see it no more in my native place! Stricken to the heart, I rose up softly and swiftly. I took a bonnet and shawl, and opening a side door, went along the park, like one forgotten, and in haste to arrive though expected by none, towards the church where the congregation had entered for the second service, and where I could go in, with but little disturbance to others, through the chancel belonging to my family. I went over the stones — every one of which was a grave-stone — and came into the deserted seat. There was Gray's place and mine; the two prayer-books we had used since we were children; there was the scene which had been thus for years, and for years we had been here together.

Now, all alone and mourning for him who was not here, I fell humbly on my knees in the holy place, and silent tears gushed out, which reverence did not seem to forbid, though it bade them flow in deep silence and submission.

The service was going on, and I joined myself to it with the feeling of one who comes for a great boon, and whose tears are dried, and whose emotion is held in awe by the intense desire and need to obtain it. But every sentence brought me nearer and nearer to the last time. *I* should hear them no more in the accustomed place, though all others who listened were at home and would come again. I would fain have held the time back, have heard those words again, have again repeated them; but I could detain all this no more than I could the shade on the dial. The service drew to a close, and all kneeled down to receive the last blessing. I had so much need of blessing, that every other faculty was absorbed in attention to it. I did so much stand in want of peace, that all my powers went to follow the minister's words invoking the peace of God, and to hope that he was praying earnestly to obtain it. I was going away alone, and I was fain to lose no syllable of a blessing before I went; the last received at home, the last from a familiar voice. It was given, and then all was over — the last sacred hour was gone, and the outer world came forward again. I could not bear much more, and I stood waiting till all should have departed before I ventured out of my place. When I did so, there was nobody near me — the congregation was dispersed, and only few footsteps at a distance, leaving the building, reached my ear. I laid down my head on the carved woodwork of the seat, following the last

strain of the organ, as it pealed over the church, and I bade everything I loved farewell. The scenes of a life rushed in and passed away with the notes, and the increasing gloom of the building was the very image of the darkness of heart and prospect with which they closed. I thought I was quite alone; but presently a step drew near, and a villager, one of the oldest tenants of the family, came up to me.

"Miss Katherine," said he, "I was watching for you in the churchyard to say good bye. They tell me you are going before next Sunday."

"Yes, I am going. I was only waiting here for the end of the playing."

The concluding notes were sounding at this moment. The old man stood by silently till they came to the last. "It is over now," said he.

"Yes, it is over." And, as I answered him, heart and voice failed me, though they had kept up till now. The old man began to speak once or twice; but he had not perhaps thought, though he now suddenly felt, how much compassion I needed. He did not know what words of comfort to use, and he gave up the attempt. He took hold of my hand, and pressed it heartily without another word; but, as he went away, I heard him murmur a few sounds, and I lifted up my head, and looked eagerly after him to catch them, for I think he said, "God bless you!"

CHAPTER VII.

Next day, at early morning, I saw my home no more: next evening I was in the crowds of London. I

lay down and slept deeply, though in so strange a place. I had not slept so deeply since I lost Gray. As soon as my senses were aroused, I started up, and, dressing, set off alone in search of Mr. Lockfield. "I'll see him," thought I, "and know it all at once, justice or injustice; and then I'll go and hide somewhere, away from the wilderness of the great town."

With this feeling I crossed for the first, and I firmly believed for the last time, a court of the Temple, where I was to find Mr. Lockfield. It was a great square, flagged all over, and the doors of the houses that opened from it were marked up the door-posts with the names of those who occupied one floor after the other within. I found the name I wanted in the common index, and, following the direction given, ascended the dirty stairs, and at the top met with the door which shut up Mr. Lockfield's apartments. Here, when I knocked, a loud cry to come in was my signal of admittance, obeying which, I found myself within an alley formed by the backs of young clerks, whose faces were turned over the left shoulder to see the new arrival. It was Mr. Lockfield, however, whom I wanted, and, asking for him, I was ushered into an adjoining room, where I found him disengaged. I had seen him but once, and had almost forgotten him. I had thought but little about him, and had been contented with the vague idea of a civil, silent, and passive man, such as he had appeared to me in the smooth current of business. This notion I had in my head unworded when I entered. He met me with an alert step, and a sort of cheerfully-sad air, which did not quite agree with my idea. Instead of the anticipated expressions of courtesy, he sat down before me, and said nothing, waiting with scrupulous and correct silence to

know what it was I might want. This embarrassed me. I began suddenly to think what right had I to be here, and to recollect I must make out my claim to be attended to; for I had none to advance to his good offices. I began, therefore — "I am come to you, Mr. Lockfield, in the hope that you will be able to explain something of this business to me. What does it all mean?"

"This business?" inquired Mr. Lockfield, with extreme civility of tone, pretending that he did not understand me.

"This insurance business. You know, surely?"

"Oh, the insurance on the life of the late Sir Gray!" answered Mr. Lockfield, speaking hard out. "Yes; but whether I can say what it *all* means, is, I fear, doubtful."

"But what do they doubt about? What is it that makes them hesitate to pay their debt?"

"Have you not heard?" said Mr. Lockfield, still speaking in a deferential voice, with which it is probable he could find no fault himself. "They think they have been deceived by Sir Gray, and that he asserted things to them respecting his health and habits which were false."

"False!" cried I, starting vehemently. "How dare you say so?"

Mr. Lockfield preserved the most beautiful composure. "It is the offices that say so," he replied, in exactly the same tone of voice.

"Sir, don't venture to repeat a word of that kind."

"I will be silent, since you wish it, madam," said he.

"No; you must not *think* such falsehoods. You must deny them; you must retract them."

"I, madam? Is it my opinion you are inquiring about....."

"Your opinion can be but one," I said, trembling, so that I could not conceal my emotion.

"Very true," said Mr. Lockfield.

"And it is..... Why don't you speak?"

"I was not sure that my opinion was what you wanted. I was speaking of the opinion of the offices."

"No, sir; yours."

"Mine, if you wish to know it, is that this attempt is a base and cowardly attack upon a gentleman of honour."

"Oh, so it is, indeed," I answered, subdued and touched by the very words which I knew he ought to use, but which he had pretended to withhold — "the most honourable, the most true....."

Mr. Lockfield looked out of the window, as though it were nothing to him, and I checked a sob, and swallowed the tears which were finding their way. "How are we to justify this truth, then, Mr. Lockfield?" I said; for though he refused me any sympathy, he had expressed an honourable feeling, and I spoke, therefore, as though he would partake my views.

"How are we to get the money? is a question that touches the case more nearly," said he.

"The money! In comparison, that's nothing at all!"

"It's only from six, to twenty thousand pounds, to me," said Mr. Lockfield, sitting quite still, but his lip quivering with emotion. "It's nothing at all, but the earnings of a whole life. It ..... it is nothing to me, who am the father of five children; certainly, nothing, as you say."

"Oh, but it's impossible it should be in danger, sir," I cried.

"Indeed, ma'am!" answered Mr. Lockfield, with the candid air of a man receiving information. "That is welcome intelligence."

"Nay, it is not I who can give you intelligence; I know that very well. But surely I can judge as well as another, that when certain facts will secure our success, and those facts exist, we must triumph in the course of an investigation into them."

"We are to have an investigation, then?" asked Mr. Lockfield.

"Are we not? I thought by your manner that they had positively determined to bring the matter to a trial."

"Ha! I wish they had," said Mr. Lockfield, with a deep sigh.

"Wish it?"

"Why, don't *you?*" said he, looking at me with much seeming simplicity.

"No; nor understand you in the least."

"Why, it would surely be better to be thought a fool than a rogue," said Mr. Lockfield. "To be sure, *you* are not concerned at present in both accusations, so you don't feel for me, of course, in my present suffering under the latter."

"What latter?"

"That of being a rogue. It is advanced by my opponents that before I can put in my claim to be a fool, I must show that I am not a rogue. It is a very simple proceeding; they are both very natural ways of going on — one is equity, and the other common law."

"Which is equity?" said I, quite puzzled.

"This part, ma'am: I demand the payment of the sum advanced by me on the faith of the offices. They say that I never advanced any sum at all; they get an order to examine my private documents relating to the affair, which is represented by them to be a purely gambling transaction."

"But that's untrue," said I. "You know, and I know, that you lent your money."

"They *say* I did not."

"Well, then it's soon proved," said I, again recovering courage; "if you are to show all that relates to it, that will justify you directly."

"Directly, yes," said Mr. Lockfield; "Chancery is always noted for being quick."

"What!" said I, "can it delay beyond a month, or perhaps two months?"

"A year — two years, you mean, I suppose," said he, with great contempt; and this was all the information I could gain.

In his turn he proceeded to inquire from me the resources with which I proposed to meet our antagonists; for we were forced to make a common cause, and though he alone was the ostensible antagonist at present, I was to bear my share of the expenses. "I have £ 10,000 secured to me by the insurance," said I.

"No, that you have not; not a penny."

"And, besides that, I have £ 3,000 which my father left me."

"Is that your all?" said Mr. Lockfield, after a moment's hesitation.

"Oh, it's enough."

"Beg pardon," said Mr. Lockfield; "quite enough, no doubt — ample — a large fortune."

But I would not quarrel. I perceived the ridicule of doing so, and stopped in time. I got up and took my leave, begging only to know, what I conceived myself entitled to know, the proceedings which might take place and upon which I insisted the more, to show I intended to pay for everything, and therefore might claim the information as my due. But I left the house still worse off than I entered it. Months, years, perhaps, of waiting before me, of waiting, too, in this dark town; and how to live meantime? I walked on, and every plan that rose in my mind I rejected. I could not go to beg a home from those who did not offer one; had they offered it, my spirit was too fretted to accept it. At last it occurred to me, that with Wolfe's mother I might pay for what I wanted, and then I resolved to seek a temporary shelter with her.

It was not without difficulty that a person so unaccustomed to London found the way through the intricate streets and passages, to the obscure residence I was in quest of. Jonathan had chosen it as being near the place where he was daily occupied, in the office of the printer; and it was one of those tedious parts of a great city, where neither old times had left their character, nor the new ones given any interest. The houses all belonged to a very low rank of society; but not low enough to be picturesque. The street had a melancholy and forsaken appearance, though full of houses and inhabitants; full indeed; for every house contained several families, and the various bells beside the doors referred to the stories, each of which had its own tenant.

The door was opened by a little maiden, who brought me to Mrs. Wolfe, and in great haste she got up to receive what was announced as "Company, ma'am." She

was alone, and at first she did not recognize me, any more, perhaps, than I should have known her, had I seen her anywhere so unexpectedly.

"Mrs. Wolfe, it is I, Katherine Buckwell; have you forgotten me so soon?"

"You, ma'am — oh, good heavens! what do you come for? you frighten me! I thought you had been in all your trouble at Buckwell."

"I have left it. I shall never go there again. Surely, you know all that has happened."

"Oh, dear, yes; and it has been very near too much for me. It was told me so suddenly too. But I never thought other of you, than that you were in all your state, as becomes a lady I am sure, that has a right and reason to mourn longer even than this."

"Ay, but don't talk of that. If it's as a lady only, and if it is in state that one may mourn, I must not do it, for I am no lady — I have no state. I am so forlorn, that if you don't give me a home I shall have none; and so poor, that you must ask me but little for it, or I cannot pay you."

"Nay, that's joking with me, Miss Buckwell; I have known before now when you have come to my house and made me laugh when I've been in one of my melancholy fits."

"Ay, all this is very like joking," said I, holding out my black gown to her; "no, don't make me say over and over the same thing that is quite too real, for indeed I cannot bear it; so believe it, and say whether or not you will shelter me."

"Shelter you! well, to be sure, how things do change! And I always used to be glad to think how a lady that was not quite born to it, had such luck as you had,

although one like me was so laid aside. And then, again, we heard you were so well off; and had taken such a handsome house, and were to live so comfortable, as soon as ever you had got over your sorrow; and it was not true after all?"

"No; not a part of it. And if you thought it hard that I had better fortune than you, take your revenge now, and grant me my petition, which is for a shelter with you."

"Oh, Miss Buckwell, don't talk in that way. It goes to my heart to think I can be of any use to you; I am sure I would not for the world; I'd rather, indeed I would, have to come again for bounty to you — and bountiful you were — yes, I'll never forget it."

"Well, then, what difficulty remains? I may lodge here?" asked I.

"Yes, I'm sure for me you may; but I'll send for Jonathan, I had rather he managed matters than I. Jonathan sometimes sees things just the very contrary to what I expect him to see them; and I can't, of late, ever be sure whether he'll praise or blame me."

"Is he so changed, then, since I knew him? — it is not so very long ago neither."

"Here he comes," said Mrs. Wolfe, hearing a foot on the stairs. "You must know, Miss Buckwell," she added, in a hurried way, "he has learned so many strange things, which I never knew anything about, that I can't answer for what he'll do."

As she spoke her son entered the room; he was paler and thinner than when he used to be our guest at Buckwell, and his eyes had a wide melancholy look which I used not to see in them. He was as unprepared as his mother to see me; but she did not suffer him to be a

moment in ignorance, and at once took him by surprise with the intelligence: "Jonathan, my dear, here's poor Miss Buckwell, and she is poorer than we, and wants us to let her a room. Is not it a great surprise?"

The colour mounted suddenly in his pale face, as he heard these words; he stopped, yet it was scarcely for a moment, and gently answering his mother, "No, the world has nothing to surprise," came up to me, and bade me welcome as though I had been in the habit of appearing at his house daily. His face and figure had more effect upon *me*. It was connected with the dearest hours of Buckwell. It was part of the very scene that was gone, and of which I had learned to bear the total loss, but not to have it set again before my eyes. I took his hand, and tried not to weep; but speak I could not, and at last tears burst forth. His mother, when she saw me give way, caught the same remembrance, and sobbed aloud; but Wolfe himself would not suffer so much as a single drop to stain his eyes — he waited patiently, like one who is above all the temptations of passion; and yet once or twice his lip quivered, and seemed to say that everything within was not so quiet as he would fain have it appear. "Is there any creature on earth," said he, "for whom it becomes us to throw our nature so much off its original balance as this? Is there any subject but one that ought to have engrossed so much of our thoughts as to give its changes power over us when they happen?"

"You must excuse him, ma'am," said his mother, half whispering to me; "it's come over him lately always when people cry or laugh to say something of that sort. I am sure he only means it for words; but it sounds very odd to those who don't know him."

"Oh, mother, you know whether my life is words or things; this lady will not long doubt between those two opinions."

"What do you mean by this lady?" said his mother; "don't you know it's Miss Buckwell? Oh, Jonathan, think how kind Sir Gray was to you, and don't be disowning them, or you'll give yourself a heartache."

"It may be so," said Wolfe; "and yet I would fain do nothing to deserve it."

"That's his way," said his mother; "he's always so dreadfully civil and humble; and yet at the end he generally says he has been in a passion and must beg pardon. That does provoke me."

"Then I'm wrong, my mother," said Wolfe. "If I make *you* angry, there is some fold in my heart which I must dissect, and find what is amiss there; for your son is born to honour and obey you, be your wishes what they may."

"But Miss Buckwell did not come to hear these notions of yours, Jonathan," said his mother; "they will do by and by, when her business with us is settled. She wants a lodging with us, only think of that, Jonathan; and she mistress of Buckwell such a little time ago!"

"And whatever she asks, have you not given?" said Wolfe.

"Why, no; because at times you have curious notions about what I do, when you are not by; and, besides that, Jonathan," and here she dropped her voice to a whisper, but I could distinguish words enough to make me understand that some other offer was pending for the room they had to dispose of.

"Hush! mother," cried her son, more quickly than he

had yet spoken; but I heard it too, and broke in on their deliberation.

"I only asked, Mrs. Wolfe; you can but refuse. I am accustomed already to find myself unwelcome. Speak out, and I will bid you farewell."

"Let us speak, and bid you welcome," said Wolfe; "that is our pleasure — I ought to say our duty, for what is a duty may be relied on, though our pleasure is fickle."

"Ay, but I claim no duty; no one owes me any. I will go somewhere where the two need not be so accurately weighed."

"Yet would not your calmest reason rather accept....." Wolfe began.

"But I don't claim calm reason; I have enough to bear without the weight of calm reason; so we'll part good friends, and good-bye to you both."

"Nay," said Wolfe, putting himself between me and the door, "we may do nothing rashly. Suffer yourself to think on what I said, dear lady, and then grant me the highest boon I am capable of receiving, which is to accept the little I have to offer."

"Ay, take it, do, my dear lady," said his mother, "it is no great inconvenience to us after all, I do assure you."

"It is the very contrary," said Wolfe, eagerly; then, instantly dropping his tone, he added, "I'm very wrong; I have been guilty of untruth; it *is* some inconvenience, but I tell you at the same time, madam, that to offer it to you is the greatest pleasure that ... is, I mean, a great pleasure. That is my plain, measured meaning."

"Well, then, I take your offer more pleasurably than you make it, but certainly not more sincerely. Wolfe,

you owe me a little sacrifice, and I am humble, humble now as heart can be. I don't want anybody to be my debtor. It is my turn. Let it be some loss — some trouble to you; I will make it as little as I can. I accept your offer, and this, too, is *my* plain, measured meaning."

I gave Wolfe my hand with these words, and the bargain between us was quickly made. There was a little room which I might call my own — it was a home at least; and I was contented to be at rest anywhere. As for Mrs. Wolfe, when the thing was settled, she seemed to exult in the prospect of one, who probably had not too high views of morality to be vexed at the misdemeanours of the maid, and the irregularities of the milkman. She took the first opportunity which the absence of her son afforded her, to enter into a history of her domestic inconveniences, and when one has a real and very great grief at heart, one is not impatient of another's small troubles, but rather inclined to be pitiful, and let them express themselves, for it does the speaker good, and one knows by experience that grief wants good done to it. So, till I found a fair excuse to get away, I let her talk and answered her. She was pleased to talk; but when it was over, recollected that talking to a person in distress was the duty of those who would keep up that person's spirits; and I heard her taking credit to herself for the virtue of the action when she had done enjoying the pleasure of it; "How well I have contrived," said she, "to cheer up poor dear Miss Buckwell."

CHAPTER VIII.

HERE, then, I was fixed again; stranded, as it were, in the middle of the tempest, for now, for the first time since the blow was struck, I began to be at rest, and to know the "after-silence on the shore." Till now, from the time I began to recover the power of action at all, I had been hurried and carried on by something to do, something great to suffer and learn, which had at least filled up the time; but now I began to wait, and day by day the pains of suspense augmented.

The only change in the monotony of my life was to go occasionally to Mr. Lockfield, and inquire the progress of affairs. He always received me with great impatience, and seemed to regret the time he spent in giving me explanations; but I thought him so hard and selfish, that I had no scruples in being selfish towards him, and doggedly went to him, calculating with myself, as I felt sure he did, how much each visit would cost me, and neglecting no inquiry which I felt inclined to make. He concealed his dislike to this intercourse so little, that one day when he was announced as paying me a voluntary visit, I felt convinced the event must indicate some important change, and looked anxiously in his face to read if possible what it was that had happened. But he studiously baffled me, affecting an air of commonplace indifference, which made me expect the more either of good or evil, because I knew that it could not be merely to declare the state of the weather or the increased length of the days, that he could come. When we had at last got rid of Mrs. Wolfe, therefore, I began eagerly

to question him, and did not conceal my expectation that he had an important communication to make.

"Certainly," said he, "unless I had been necessitated by a sufficient cause, I should not have intruded myself into your presence."

"And what is it, then? — pray speak, I am ready to hear you."

"And help me, I hope, if I may presume so far. You have frequently spoken of your desire to advance money in Sir Gray's defence."

"That's most true; the first moment it is wanted."

"I am not particular as to moments," said Mr. Lockfield. "It will do a week, or even three weeks hence. Indeed, I chiefly venture from a wish to ascertain to what extent we may practically rely upon you."

"I have told you very often, sir, the extent of my resources. Dr. Monkton is, I believe, the legal guardian of my fortune, but I will obtain it from him whenever it is necessary."

"I think the necessity is not very doubtful, if indeed ..... but you know what has happened?"

"No."

"You have forgotten, perhaps, the equity business in which I am being proved a rogue."

"Oh, no."

"It should seem the advocates of this opinion don't trust solely to success by that means. They resolve to be ready to try the other means, should that fail, and in the wantonness of money, they have engaged all the opinions which are worth having at the bar on their side of the question."

"How much of that is to stand, after you have taken off the technical mystery?" said I, angry at the manner

in which he always tried to frighten me, and quite sure this could not be a literal statement.

"Humph!" said Mr. Lockfield, thinking of something savage to say, and unable for the moment to command any expression but that inarticulate one.

"Because you know," I added, rather repenting my haste, "I have been told by yourself of the lawyer with whom you have held consultations, and who has given you favourable opinions of your case. At all events, I cannot be wrong in holding *him* excepted."

"I won't dispute whether or not you are wrong, madam — you are certainly mistaken."

"Humph!" said I, in my turn.

"Because," he continued, "his consultation was paid by one fee, and his services on the other side have been retained by another. I was not so forward as my antagonists in laying down two hundred guineas; and his voice therefore (whatever becomes of his opinion) is gone over to their side."

"If this is true, we are lost indeed!"

"That is your decided opinion, is it?" said Mr. Lockfield.

"How can I tell?" said I, vexed to the very heart. "If common sense and justice were the guides, they would pay at once, and to the last shilling."

"I wish they would pay to the *middle* shilling," said Mr. Lockfield, dropping his voice, and marking his words so as to fix my attention upon them. "The middle or the half would be better than none at all."

"But who talks of the half when the whole is your due?"

"Nobody — I wish they did."

"They never shall, though," said I, "while I can

help it. They owe their debt to my brother Gray, and it is only by allowing that their horrid charges are true, that you can give them back a farthing."

"A farthing," said Mr. Lockfield, "is a very small part of £20,000."

"Don't jest now, sir; this is too serious a matter. Recollect, sir, that it is not you only who are concerned in this affair; my interests have been thrown along with yours, and you cannot do anything to compromise them without answering to me. I will not hear a compromise mentioned."

"At least, then, you will be pleased to hear the subject of expense mentioned," said Mr. Lockfield, with much agitation.

"To be sure I will, and I've told you so a hundred times. I'll pay everything — I am ready to pay all I have in the world rather than you should give way to this persecution of my brother's honour."

"It won't do, madam, to blind yourself or me either with words," said Mr. Lockfield. "Let us bring that to figures. To carry and gain our suit, let us say coolly it will cost £—; and to lose it — which is what we must contemplate as possible — let us say coolly again £— a-piece. Now compare that with your fortune, ma'am, and say how are you to live afterwards?"

"Oh, Gray, Gray," I cried, "yet I will never forsake you!"

"But, ma'am, there are things which can be done, and things which can't be done. You may wish to pay the national debt, but you can't."

"Oh, me! can it be possible that Gray should need defence from me, and I not be able to give it! Is it come to this? and only a few months ago, he was to me

like a providence. Sir, don't forsake me yet, for I would lay down my life if it could defend his cause."

Mr. Lockfield was a little moved at my earnestness, but he had a point to gain, and he would not let pity deprive him of victory. He seemed to me to have received some hints and hopes of concession on the part of his adversaries which the extreme embarrassment to which they had reduced him, inclined him to catch at, but having made common cause with me, he could not accept them without my consent, and it was in the view of preparing me for this that he came now to me. I could not avoid his conclusion, for I was poorer even than he, yet to give up my brother's honour, and make a bargain with it, was the thing they asked, and which he seemed to listen to. I became silent, therefore, for there was no victory for me in words, and I would yield none, in fact. Convince me as he might, I had resolved how to act, and while he pursued his arguments to their undeniable conclusion, my only thought was in what way to prevent him from following them into action; and perhaps he thought he had persuaded me, when, upon his taking leave, I stood meditating what possible resources I could use to induce him to continue his resistance. And now my thoughts began to turn to my former friends. They had been with them many times before; but waywardly and unjustly, like the thoughts of one who wants soothing and conciliating, however far from obtaining it he may be. At first I had cared but little for anybody, feeling as though all the powers of loving were gone with Gray. But so inconsistent is one's heart, that I verily think the neglect into which I fell, was more likely to renew my old interest than kindness would have been. At first I thought I would die in

obscurity if none sought me. I was eager to die, and prompt to be forgotten; but with time and the operation of many causes I grew more just, and I acknowledged to myself that it was possible some might be willing to be kind to me, and really not know where to find me. Dr. Monkton, our oldest friend — he could not, in fact, have thus suddenly lost all interest in me, although I had let my roving and melancholy thoughts accuse him of it a hundred times. Perhaps I should have hesitated much longer before I sought him, had not this interview with Mr. Lockfield urged me on; as it was, I had dearer interests than my own to consult, and I determined at once to go to him.

Accordingly early the next morning I repaired to his house, and was ready to take as a good omen or otherwise the answer I should receive — At home, or Not at home. The door was opened in a moment, and I saw the face of a servant whom I did not know, and who received me, therefore, just in the way the appearance of a solitary pedestrian with the air of no pretensions suggested. He ushered me into a room already occupied by patients of Dr. Monkton's waiting for a morning's audience, all thinking of themselves, but few showing it. One was studying the "Quarterly Review" for April, seven years back, and another "The Bird," a work of Dr. Monkton's school friend, Mr. St. Andrew. One man had resigned himself to writing, and had written three letters, and was beginning a fourth; and a lady was talking in a half under-voice to her companion, about Lady Lewellen's particular wish that she should consult Dr. Monkton, since the complaints of the two ladies were similar down to the minutest symptoms. The only person who was seduced into showing signs

that he heard and heeded her, was a very bilious man, who could not prevail upon himself to sit quiet, and who hearing her voice in the general silence, came at last and asked her some question about the physician.

"I've not been very long a patient, sir," said the lady, in answer to his inquiry; "and indeed I hardly could continue to be one of so unfeeling a practitioner, were it not that a friend of mine makes a point of it with me — he has no heart."

"But he's called clever, is not he?" said the bilious man.

"Prodigiously! but my theory is, that there's no real talent without heart. Now, as an instance, he actually overlooked my most important symptoms for want of heart. I've such an unfortunate sensibility to music, owing to particular circumstances — unhappy circumstances, alas! — well, well — I said to him, 'on that chord hangs my complaint, sir,' and he answered me, 'Let it hang, then, till it's dead.'"

"It was very harsh," said the bilious man; "but it is not that sort of thing I have to complain of. I thought him indeed particularly attentive to my symptons, only he is a little alarming. I ventured to inquire whether my liver was a little affected, and he said, 'No, sir, there's no affectation about it; it is likely to lead you to natural death.' Of course I did not believe him, but it was a little alarming."

"That was to get the more credit if he cured you," said the lady. "I've always observed that in the most critical cases like mine, he pretends to see no danger at all. Two days ago, when I was so ill I could scarcely walk into his presence, and asked him the best remedy for such weakness, he said, 'Oh, Lord — get the fidgets!'"

"I declare to you," said the bilious man, "that is hardly a more extraordinary remedy than he has given me, only mine was serious, whereas his recommendation to you was burlesque."

"Burlesque, also, you may depend on it," said the lady. "Of course he would treat *me* seriously, if he would treat any one so."

"Oh, but mine is a written prescription," said the bilious man. "It is one of the rules of diet he gave for my private guidance."

"And pray, sir, if it is no secret....."

"Not at all, ma'am; it's merely my daily dinner. I have observed it for ten days, and find myself, I really think, the worse for it. It is.....can you guess? — for the dinner of a rather bilious man, you know."

"No, indeed, I can't guess."

"Why, it is 'rich giblets.' Now is not that odd?"

"Odd!" cried the lady; "mad, I rather think."

"Most extraordinary — quite absurd," said several other persons; while one pronounced it highly original — wonderful man! — and said it was exactly conformable to the system he should himself have expected from so original a thinker.

Meantime, the patient produced the prescription, in order to confirm the statement he had made, and every one eagerly pressed forward to look at it. It was written in Dr. Monkton's own infamous hand, and the whole was a series of hieroglyphics which required study to unravel; but the words alluded to were rather less plain even than the others, and to the uninitiated did in fact present a resemblance to rich giblets. When it came to my turn to look, however, I discovered the secret at once.

"I could almost think, sir," I said, venturing to hint what I was perfectly certain of, "I should almost think it means *rice plain boiled*. The last letter of the first word, which looks like h, is e, rice; and then this letter which you think a capital G, is the word *plain*, run together, and those you read iblets are on the contrary *boiled*, quite evidently. Don't you think so?"

The company listened with incredulity, all but the poor patient, whom alarm made sensitive, and who felt with horror a growing conviction that I was right.

"Good heavens! my liver!" murmured he; — "and then what will the Doctor say! — and then, again, what I have spent in geese! — and then, again, to mistake the Doctor's handwriting! Won't you look again, ma'am? perhaps you may think it is giblets after all."

I looked, but could not think what he wished, and while I was looking, and the company laughing, there came a servant to the door to summon the poor bilious man himself into the presence of Dr. Monkton. The perspiration stood on his face with fear, and he wore the appearance of a child who has just learned that it is a crime to eat with his knife, or who has broken his uncle's eye-glass. But my attention was diverted from him by the aspect of the servant who summoned him, and whom I perceived to be one of the domestics who had been most frequently at Buckwell. Upon seeing me, he started, and he could not refrain from abandoning the gentleman whose turn it was to the care of another servant, and returning respectfully to me, murmured —

"We did not expect you, madam. Master will be so glad." Then, motioning me to follow him, he heartily apologised that I had been waiting, and gave me a room apart, saying his master would be with me directly. So

far it was good. I was rather glad to think that Dr. Monkton then had shown some signs of interest about me, and I sat down to wait, feeling that I had something like a pleasure in prospect in seeing my old friend. The moment the door was closed, and the room still, I perceived that I was very near Dr. Monkton, for I heard his voice in high disdain on the other side of the folding doors, which separated the drawing-room I was in from the other.

"What does plain spell, sir?" said he. "Did you never get so far in your spelling-book; or were not you put into words of five letters; or, perhaps, they forgot to teach you meanings as well as sounds? But you may go and die for me, sir; I can't cure you, if I would, and if I could I would not. I'll be high priest no more to the sacrifice of a goose."

"But, sir, if you would only look at the words."

"Well, sir, I do look at them, and read them, and see them to be excellent words. Will you tell me this is not plain plain, sir? Will you tell me that.....?"

"Sir, not *quite* plain."

"Is it giblets then, sir?"

"No, sir; it *is* plain, undoubtedly — only...."

"It *is* plain, then?"

"Sir?"

"Is it giblet?"

"No, sir, no; it is plain."

"To be sure it is, and you know it very well, and can't deny it; and yet, in the very face of the thing, you have lived ten days on rich giblets! You may go, sir; you may die!"

"Nay, sir," said the patient, "that I will not do. I'm come here to be cured, and killed I will not be, if

there's power to make me live. Speak to me, sir," he added in a desperate tone.

"There's life in the old.....life in *you* yet," said Dr. Monkton, laughing; and I could perceive he was mollified by his own scolding, and the man's aroused spirit. "And how was it, pray, that you were brought at last to the sense of your faulty reading?" said Dr. Monkton.

"It was by means of a lady. She is waiting below in your room, and....."

"What business had she to know what my handwriting meant?"

"I don't exactly know."

"You don't know anything, sir. Who was it?"

"Sir, it was a lady, and in black."

"And could read my handwriting? Not a plain girl, was it?"

"Plain, decidedly."

"Ay, plain, and in black. Not a thin girl, was she, with a wide mouth?"

"I think so, sir."

"'T is she," said Dr. Monkton, and seemed striding towards the door, but his patient stopped him.

"Don't make me a desperate man, Doctor. You don't know what it is to have a cordon of blue devils about you, gnawing your entrails. You *shall* conjure them away from me, for I know you can. Here's your pen—here's your wand."

"You're right," said Dr. Monkton, laughing again.

Then there was a silence for a minute, except the rustling of paper and scratching of a pen, and then he seemed to give what he had written with a loud "There!" and his boots creaked again in act to make his exit,

but before he had taken three steps he stopped, and sonorously clapping one hand in the hollow of the other, plainly demanded his fee. There was a clatter of one piece of money upon the other as though he had quite unstrung the nerves of his bilious patient; and next he finally addressed himself to looking for the thin girl with the wide mouth. I went to the door and met him as he came out of his own room.

"Ah, Katherine," said he, "so you are here at last, my poor child. Well, I did not expect you this particular morning, though I've looked for you a long time."

"How could that be? Why should you even have thought I was in London?" I asked.

"What, do you think I did not know that? Is it in the nature of things that an object of interest should suddenly be laid aside, and no inquiry made after it?"

"Did you make inquiry after me? Why did not you come to see me then?"

"Because I thought it best for you to take the course you yourself fixed upon; I considered it an effort of nature, and that if you did not follow it, you would suffer from being checked in it."

"I *did* suffer when I thought all the whole world had forgotten me."

"But was not it *you* who rather had forgotten them? You knew where to come to *me;* you could have found the Careys; but it was highly improbable that we should know where you were. I thought all the time, you would be hatching some such conceit, and the best way to get over it would be to let it grow and come to maturity, and die off of itself."

"But you did know where *I* was? I was right, then, and you would not come to me."

"The event has nothing to do with the previous judgment. It was a clear and just view of the probability of circumstances which I wanted you to gain."

"Oh, Dr. Monkton, I can't think of those things now; they were playthings for a time of peace. I can think of nothing but Gray and Buckwell now."

"Nay, nay," said Dr. Monkton, laying hold of my arm, as I turned away my head; "it would have been better for you, indeed, if you could have formed your principles a little out of this situation. That was my intention."

"I never thought of myself though; it was not my character and my education I could think of; it was real things which occupied me, and it would have been kind of you to have come and helped me."

"Why, Katherine, Katherine!" cried Dr. Monkton. "I hardly know you."

"Well, I don't wonder at that, for I hardly know myself. But how should I not be changed when everything is changed round me? Oh, Dr. Monkton, don't you know what they say of Gray?"

"Yes; things that, said three months ago, would have seemed like a madman's dream."

"Oh, a mere dream. Was not he indeed the noblest, the kindest, the most light-hearted, the most honourable — was not he all this?"

"Ay, that he was," said Dr. Monkton, with more emotion than he wished to show; "he was a fine creature, Katherine. I think I see him now, the last day he parted from us at the hall steps; he turned round to bid us farewell again, lifting up his hat half in play, half in love — smiling — it was the finest of human shapes."

Dr. Monkton had caught the enthusiasm of his own picture, but he had melted my heart past resistance, and I laid down my head and wept.

"Come, come," said he, "this is not right; this is less than it should be. Be strong, Katherine — dry your tears."

"Why? tell me why, then?" I said passionately. "I can do it presently, perhaps, but you who are happy might bear a little while with me for crying, who am so miserable."

"I am not happy — only I am stronger than you; but I have more reason still to grieve."

"Are you not happy? then I'm very sorry for you; and if *you* wept, I would not bid you dry your tears, in order to please me."

"Nonsense! who says it is to please me? I bid you be strong, because there is good reason for it. Consider how many there are in the world more unhappy than you."

"More's the pity; I'm sure I don't wish them to be so — it does me no good; and if that is the best consolation, there is somebody in the world for whom there is no consolation at all — the most miserable person in the world has no consolation."

"Pshaw! child," said Dr. Monkton, "you have been thinking too much; you must take advice if you would do well in the world; and, whether you take it or not, one thing I tell you,

" 'to be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering.' "

"Well, I am sure you are right, there," I answered him; "and, indeed, if you knew all, you would not say I had been weak yet."

"Good girl, if so it is. And what have you been doing?"

"All I could, but that is little — I don't mean with respect to myself, for it does not signify about me; but Gray, Gray! it is him I think of. Oh, Dr. Monkton, they will succeed after all!"

"Indeed, child, their power is tremendous, and they seem inclined to use it to the utmost. You are both of you very poor — I don't know what you are to do."

"There's only one thing — fight till all is gone, sooner than give way to their calumnies an inch."

"But what does Mr. Lockfield say?"

"Nay, don't *you* talk in that manner. He hints something about compromise, but I would not hear him, and that is partly my business with you. Somebody must help me never to give in until we are quite crushed, so long as these lies are breathed against my Gray. *You* will help me — will you not?"

"Why, nobody believes them — none who knew him, that is....."

"And shall anybody else believe them? No, they never shall. Mr. Lockfield says that want of money will bring us to silence; now, there *shall* be money — somewhere and by some means I will find it; and if you refuse to give me my own, I am capable of forging your name to get it."

"Nay, nay, my child, how desperately you talk. But where's the immediate necessity? Lockfield has behaved very well to you."

"In what way? He perpetually intimates that I am in his debt, and that....."

"No, no; you mistake him. On the contrary, you must know that while you thought we were all forgetting

you, I have had dealings with him about your affairs, and offered in your name to discharge the amount which he might claim professionally for managing your little concerns so far, but he refused to take anything. He said that when other people came to be paid, you must of course bear your share in it, but that as far as his own labour went, he worked for himself for nothing, and meant to do the same by you, as the cause was common."

"Did he indeed; and how I have behaved to him! that is, I have behaved as was natural under the impression he chose to give me of his own conduct. It is not my fault."

"But you are obliged to him?"

"Oh, yes, it is very generous. I must be obliged. It will give me more money to spend for my brother — I must be obliged. Yes, I will go and thank him to-morrow."

"To be sure; and as for the command of your own fortune, which you ask for, you must have it, I suppose, when it is necessary; but, in the meantime, let us see if nothing occurs to spare you yet."

"Do you mean that they may do us justice? oh, yes, that may be."

"I am sure I don't know," said he. "It is all a chance, I believe. I have heard one person say they will, and another that they won't. But what is meant by this desertion of the lawyer who was consulted for you, I am quite unable to say. Perhaps, after all, Mr. Lockfield only says it to frighten you. If so, we'll beat him, Katherine. You shall go and inquire from him yourself how the case really stands, and then you can meet him armed with his own weapons. What think you, my dear?"

I was willing to do anything, and Dr. Monkton, now having conceived a project, was anxious to fulfil it. He bade me wait while he dismissed the crowd of his patients; and after dealing health or sickness, I know not which, around, took me into his brougham, which waited at the door, and bade them drive straight to the Temple.

"Go on boldly, Katherine," said Dr. Monkton, when he had brought me to our journey's end. "Go under the covered passage into the court beyond, and ask for Mr. Son's door. I'll call again for you, but if I don't come in time, you can walk home alone. There's no difficulty in that, you know."

I followed his directions, and without any trouble found my way to the lawyer's den; but I trembled at the threshold of his door as it unclosed for me, and tried before entering to get at a glance some knowledge of the presence I was intruding upon. My name would be enough, I was sure, to make him know my errand, for the business had been laid before him in consultation; but in the meantime what was he? cross, unkind — like Mr. Lockfield, and like most other people to me? or placable, and to be won over by smooth words? The room before me was of more human appearance than that of Mr. Lockfield's. It had larger windows, one of which opened to the ground, and beyond this, there was the silence and the dusky greenness of London trees, and a garden. Round the room were book-cases, piles of papers on the floor. I observed an easy chair, and there was a small picture on the wall. At the table sat a man, the one I was in search of, the one whose face I was half afraid to see, doubting that there might be a host of troubles in it for me; but at a glance I saw that

it was younger than I expected, and had an expression of gentleness upon very handsome features, which encouraged me at first, but directly after I thought to myself —

"He is a man accustomed to be well received, and to give pleasure by his appearance — he will not have patience with one who has nothing to recommend her — he would listen better if I looked better. Alas! and it is not my fault." But all the same, I came forward a few steps, and he, looking up from a heap of papers, almost started when he saw a bonnet and shawl opposite to him. He rose hastily, and on each side there were half sentences about intruding, and being very happy, and then there was a moment's pause, which I was afraid would grow to a silence I should not know how to break, so I plunged into the matter at once.

"Sir," I said, "I am come myself to you, because I think, perhaps, there has been some mistake about a business ..... in short, about Mr. Lockfield, sir."

"Lockfield," said he, quite in the dark on the subject; "I don't remember such a case. Are you Mrs. Lock..... Miss Lockf..... hem!" said he, clearing his voice in a way to make his guesses pass for an obstruction in his throat, if none of them were good hits.

"Oh, no," said I; "but it's a matter that interests me very much, as you will suppose, for I am Katherine Buckwell."

"No doubt, very much," answered he, quite unaware (as I could plainly perceive) that any such consequences followed.

"I am *his* sister," said I.

"Oh, yes; you wish me to undertake his defence?"

said Mr. Son. "Yes, yes; I see. I will speak to your attorney whenever you please. Yes, exactly."

"No; I think not," said I, greatly perplexed. "Perhaps I have made a mistake; I thought it had been, I am sure it *was* you, who were consulted."

"Oh, yes, I recollect it all *perfectly* well. Your attorney and I can agree upon the subject without difficulty. His chambers, I think, are in ..... in ....."

"I have no attorney," said I; "Mr. Lockfield is one himself —"

"Oh, exactly, yes," answered he; "Buckwell and Lockfield, I know them perfectly well. Mr. French," said he, elevating his voice, and stretching his hand to the bell to call his clerk, who was, I supposed, his memory for trifling matters; but I stopped him.

"No, indeed, sir, that is not it. I thought you would recollect how his fortune had been trusted to a certain company of men. They are called the Vulture, the Specious, Reed, and others; they refuse to pay their debt."

"Oh, I understand you now, madam," cried Mr. Son, "and I beg your pardon for my misapprehensions. Quite true! an insurance case; a case in which I took a great deal of interest, as you will easily suppose, and one in which I trust even my poor abilities will be sufficient to establish Mr. Lockfield's cause."

"I am so glad," said I, rising (which he was delighted to see, and eagerly seconded), "Mr. Lockfield has mistaken, for he told me you were retained for the opposite party."

"Did he, indeed," said Mr. Son. "Nay; I certainly have given him my opinion on his case, and been present at more than one consultation."

"Oh, I'm sure of that," said I, "for what you said on the subject was reported to me repeatedly. But notwithstanding that, he fancied, indeed he positively said, that he had lost you as his counsel."

"Oh, I don't think so," said Mr. Son, now really ringing the bell. "I am retained," he continued, speaking to the straightforward looking clerk who appeared, "in the case of Lockfield *against* the office — hey?"

"*For* it, sir," said the clerk.

"Really? Well, I had not the least idea of that. Certainly, I was once on the other side."

"No, sir — only consulted," said the clerk; "you've a general retainer, sir, for the Specious in all their cases. The other party laid their case for your opinion before you, sir — favourable, sir — but the party did not give the fee necessary for taking you out of your own court."

"Ha! indeed! I sincerely beg your pardon, madam, for my mistake; but you will easily understand that it is difficult, among a variety of engagements, to retain an exact recollection of the nature of each. I am concerned, indeed, that my engagements prevent me from giving you any assistance, but, be assured, madam, that I wish you the success which the justice of your case deserves."

"But you can't oppose us, then?" I asked, puzzled at what he was saying.

"Merely in court," said he; "believe me, that I was really struck with the hardship of the case. Can I have the pleasure of answering any more questions?" said he, laying his hand on his mountains of papers, as if he could no longer refrain from working at them.

"Oh, no," said I, despondingly; "no, certainly, if you are against us."

"Not at all," said Mr. Son; "you do me injustice; I heartily wish you success."

What nonsense, thought I, when he says he is going to oppose us. He must think me a weak woman indeed if I swallow that kind of flattery; and this reflection glanced through my mind almost while I began speaking in answer, "I don't know how we are to succeed if wishes are all the help that is given us."

"True," said Mr. Son; "but every one has not been so unfortunate as I am, I hope."

"Every one," said I; "they have left nobody."

"Nobody, metaphorically speaking," said Mr. Son; "but, in fact, I and two more perhaps, are the exceptions to *everybody*, I imagine."

"Indeed, sir, I do not understand the matter; less now than ever; but what I was told was, that upon the first beginning of the affair our adversaries being so rich sent fees to everybody, which Mr. Lockfield and I could not afford to do, and so engaged their services — that now you have deserted us, we have nobody of any kind of experience to get justice done us."

"Pardon me, don't say *deserted;* you'll observe that my services, such as they were, have been among the first secured by your antagonist; you will observe that — so deserted is not the word — but let me understand you. If this is so, you really are hardly treated — and, for my part, I would have you take good advice on the subject."

"Pray, do *you* give me some advice," said I, "for I know no one to whom to apply — that is, if you CAN

conscientiously, without prejudicing you against your clients — I don't ask anything that is unfair."

"Unfair? to whom? Why, it is a hard case, certainly," said he; "you have as good a right to the law as any one else, and it is hard that an individual should be overpowered by the mere force of wealth."

"Indeed it is," said I, "and to have such falsehoods established by it; to think that they believe such untruths and persuade others of them, is too cruel."

"Exactly; besides, whether true or not, there is no reason why you should lose your money; though," he added hastily, as if recollecting himself, "it is the truth you regard, of course — very honourable feeling, very creditable to you. But, as I was saying....." He then, with great charity and patience, put his elbow on his papers, and began to explain matters to me. He said, that it was for the interest of the Vulture and the other birds and beasts, as he called them, to secure all the legal assistance which could insure their cause; but, on the other hand, it was against their interest to frighten the world by a display of tyranny in overwhelming a client which should prevent others from engaging with them. The latter interest he therefore advised should be used against the former. "Now," said he, "let your attorney write to the directors, and make his complaint; let him presume that their well-known liberality and honourable practice will induce them to anticipate him in his request, that they will release some of the counsel they have engaged, and you will see that I shall still have the pleasure of defending you."

"Had not he better say that you think our cause the fairest," I asked, "and wish to defend it?"

"Oh, not at all," said Mr. Son; "by no means. He will be aware that no names are to be used. There is no kind of occasion for it either, for I am certain, whoever it be that is released by the office, he will have a pleasure in establishing your cause."

"But not if he is prejudiced already on the other side," said I.

"Oh, nobody is prejudiced," said Mr. Son, smiling; "besides, in a case of this kind it is evidently a hard matter," he continued, turning over the leaves of a note-book as if looking for memoranda, and beginning his sentence over and over again, till he had found them, "it is hard, indeed, and a hardship that can be widely felt, that a man when he thinks to have provided for the beloved whom he leaves behind, should be but laying up for them ruin in the shape of litigation..... A contract of this kind ..... a contract of the nature we are discussing, Miss Buckwell, is one, made, I may say, with the dead, and partakes their sacred character. They have died depending on it; and shall their last thought be violated when they have for ever gone 'through the iron gates of life?.....'" He broke off, and, as if the notes had recalled a train of thought which had grown up when the subject came freshly before him, looked more excited and interested than I had yet seen him.

"But how can I be sure that you will be our defender?" I said; "of course, they will not give up their best counsel if it depends on them, and you say we are not to mention any names."

"Oh, no," said Mr. Son, bowing, as it seemed to me, at the compliment I thereupon recollected to have paid him, and smiling at my simplicity; "that is not the way

of proceeding. Your attorney must apply, as I have said; then the names of all those lawyers who have been retained by the office will be placed together in a bag, and from this number an office-clerk will draw two, who will have the satisfaction of undertaking your cause. Nothing can be fairer."

"But still it does not follow that your name will be one."

"Oh, not exactly," said Mr. Son, clearing his voice. "The clerk's hand, however, has a *sort* of instinct; but that is not to the purpose."

"And the other name?" said I.

"Oh, the other will be the one they can best spare, unless he has the pleasure, like me, of declaring his preference."

"Well, that will not signify," said I, "as you understand and undertake the cause; and now, sir, I will detain you no longer, except to offer my thanks." I rose, and began to say how much I was obliged for his advice, but he so plainly longed to be rid of me, even at the loss of my compliments, that I cut my speech short, and simply bade him good-bye. He was delighted.

"Farewell, madam," he said; "good morning. Let me open the door; no trouble ..... fine evening ..... your carriage ..... oh, you walk;" and, so saying, he rapidly retreated to his room, and I resumed my way home, not yet quite comprehending how any one beside a person's self could decide what he was to believe.

CHAPTER IX.

So Mr. Son became our defender, and, in the course of the consultations which took place between him and the other lawyers, information was required, among other people, from old Rooke. The old man was told by letter that some one would call upon him for answers to certain questions, but, when he understood the matter, he, without waiting for the envoy, set out at once, and came in person to London. His daughter lived here, and he took up his abode for a time with her; but his first care was to come to Wolfe's lodging and inquire for me.

"God bless you, Miss Katherine," he said, when we were up stairs; "so it is you indeed in this sad place. Well, I would not believe it, though yonder man as guided me said there was no other street as answered to the name; but, indeed, I came through many fitter for one that has lived at Buckwell."

"Oh, Rooke, this is as fit as any other, for I could find no place like *that* you know."

"No, no; nor is there such great odds in a town, one part or the other. God help the poor creatures who live here always! Even the sun don't look on this side of the street, though I saw that most of them have got a bush in a brick pot outside their window, to keep them in some mind of the garden where Adam was born."

"Ay, and I also have one, you see, to look like something from my own Eden at home. Is it beautiful still, Rooke?"

"What, your garden? Yes, they tell me so; but I have not been at the Hall a long while. I thought to

go as usual, but they have new laws, and I stopped going; new laws suit young folks, and the younger people say Mr. Tasebrook is a useful, just man; but the more they say, the more I think of the old times, though they listen to me less and less."

"Do they? What, are they forgetting us?"

"Nay, I don't say that; but it is not the same as when I was the master's favourite, and I don't take any great delight in hearing of Mr. Tasebrook being here, and Mr. Tasebrook doing this and that. I think to myself, well, so did Sir Gray, and more, and would do a good turn to anybody I spoke for."

"And now you come to do *him* a good turn, Rooke," I said, "and his poor sister too. Nobody thinks of us now but you."

"What, are none of your grand friends good to you, Miss Katherine; nor none that you were good to, neither? These Wolfes, are they respectful as they ought to be?"

"Oh, I don't know that they *ought* to be anything. Yes, yes, in their way they behave very well. Mrs. Wolfe is glad I am here; and Jonathan, though he is changed, is not more so than one might expect."

"Ay, he always was odd, and I used to say, the wind had still to blow that was to bend him."

"That's true enough; he is bent now, and luckily it is all to the good side, though he overtopples a little; but indeed I have nothing to complain of — he does all he can for me."

"Well, well," said Rooke, "it is hard that you should want any help of his; but let the beast be as true as the bird, and you will have safe guardianship, though it be rough!" So saying, the old man took my hand in both his, for he knew us when we were children, and

when we thought it a great privilege to be his companion.

It was about a week after he was settled in London with his daughter, that one morning, coming back from an early visit to him, Mrs. Wolfe told me that her son had expressed great disappointment, when he returned to breakfast, at finding me out, and had left the house purporting to seek me at old Rooke's lodging. So, having nothing to do, I walked leisurely back to Rooke's, thinking to hear of, or meet him. I found he had already been there, and was gone, and Rooke said he had expressed excessive regret at not meeting with me.

"Did he leave no message, then?"

"None," said Rooke. "He said he must submit, and that Providence pointed out he was not to meet with you."

"What had he to say, I wonder. Perhaps nothing better than good advice, and, if so, I am glad I missed him."

"Yes, indeed," said Rooke, "it is not respectful for the like of him; but I think there was more in his head than that, for he said it was a judgment on his sins to miss you thus."

"Oh, poor Jonathan! perhaps it was something *I* could have done for *him*."

"I don't think that neither, for he said also that you had a great privilege in suffering affliction; and, says he, 'Would I were so favoured!'"

"Pshaw!" said I. "Oh, it's only some crotchet. Never mind, he had always queer tastes."

So I thought no more of him, except, perhaps, a passing feeling of surprise that his usual hour of returning home at night passed without bringing him

although he had this urgent communication to make to me. It was growing late when he came at last; he bore the appearance of extreme exhaustion, but, as was not unusual in such a case, the bodily pain and weakness seemed to have kindled the fumes, if not the flame, of the spirit, and to have put him under the control of those impulses which the bodily discipline had excited. His lips were pale, and his eyes dilated and bright; he walked with that measured step which a person assumes who is in a half state of intoxication, and yet anyone who knew him might have ventured their all that if *his* brain reeled, it was from the intoxication of a strict and fanatic abstinence.

"Jonathan," said his mother, "sit down and eat something, child. I've kept your supper warm, and I'm sure you look as if you wanted it."

"That may be," said Wolfe, "but I have a duty still to perform."

"Nobody has such troublesome duties as you, Jonathan," cried his mother. "It is very well we don't all know as much about them as you do, or the world would come to a full stop."

"Oh, mother, if I only knew better ..... but one thing I do know, that this day's duties to Heaven having been performed, I am now at liberty to attend to my neighbour. Would it had been permitted me to have fulfilled that social duty first!"

"I heard you wanted something with me," I said, "but you did not wait for me."

"No, madam, and painfully have I submitted this day to the trial. Hardly and imperfectly have I fulfilled the vow which I made, and which claimed my attention before all other concerns. I had a message of

importance to you, it is true, and surely I offered a costly sacrifice in dedicating a day to the holy Temple, which was demanded by your interests."

"Costly, indeed!" cried Mrs. Wolfe. "Poor dear Miss Buckwell has but little to sacrifice out of!"

"Nay, mine was the burthen," said Wolfe; "on *my* part it was voluntary — to this lady is granted the favour to suffer involuntarily."

"It's very much against my good will," I said, "that's certain. But what is it after all?"

"Alas!" said Wolfe, "but for the error you have just avowed, perhaps I might have been permitted this moment to have told you all."

"Does it make so much difference, then?" I asked.

"I fear so," said Wolfe. "Have you heard nothing?"

"No, nothing all day."

"Don't you know what has happened respecting Mr. Lockfield?"

"No."

"His character is clear; his adversaries renounce their accusations without permitting him so much as to be brought before the judge."

"Good news for once, I declare! Why, Mr. Wolfe, where *is* the use of calling things by their wrong names? I wonder he did not send me word."

"Oh, madam, the bad news is yet to come: they have sent him a proposition at the same time, which I would have given my right hand to have been permitted to make known to you this morning, but it was not the will of heaven!"

"Oh, Jonathan, what is it?" cried his mother. "I'm glad, as it so happened, that I am by to hear it — I

mean, I may be of use to Miss Buckwell, if it is such very bad news."

"No, it is fit for no ear but yours," said Wolfe, rising; "it should have been known to you hours ago, at least human wisdom would fain have it so; now, perhaps, it is too late." So saying, he opened the door of a little room adjoining, and carefully closed it behind us; he had brought in one lighted tallow candle, which he set on the bare deal table; then went on with a trembling voice —

"You know how this long process has exhausted the resources of Mr. Lockfield; you know what power it has given to temptation over him."

"The temptation to be bribed into acknowledging their accusations just? God forbid he should think of yielding *to that!*"

"Pray in earnest," said Wolfe, "for now you tremble on the verge of the truth. Read that," he added, giving me a letter.

"What's this? a letter from the Vulture — that's the office in whose name they all carry on their persecution. What has it to say? 'Sir — honour — your unimpeachable character as demonstrated by the documents deposited in the Equity Court . . . . . disposed to relinquish the suit . . . . . doing justice to your unimpeachable,' — over again. Well, that's all very fine," I said, turning the page. "And what's next? — 'It has been signified to us, that your intention is to carry your suit before a court of law' — undoubtedly — 'truth . . . . . concealment on the part of your client!'" I cried, catching at the sense — "'Compassion for you!' Oh, me! what do they dare say, dare assume? — 'Convinced *you* are not the deceiver.'" I just glanced on,

for the words fell on my eyes like fire-flakes. I forget them, but the meaning was, that he should avow himself to have been led into error by my dead brother, and that, casting all blame on him who was gone, should on that condition receive half of his just claim. This was the compromise offered.

"And he has dared to listen!" I said, speaking out strong and fierce with indignation.

"Ay, this morning."

"Nay, Wolfe, you make me mad. If you say you knew of this, and I could have prevented it, and it has been done because you had some saintly conceit in your head, you are a villain, and no better than they!" Wolfe began some sentence, but I would not hear him. "Do you mean to say he has set his name to these lies? Has this been done?"

"I hope not," said Wolfe; "but I cannot tell. Neither ought I, nor ought you, madam, to care. I have composed my own mind to patience."

"Selfish fool!" cried I. "But what does it matter, talking to you? Let me waste no more time. Let me pass."

"Where?" said Wolfe, detaining me. "It is more than ten o'clock. Whatever he intended to do to-day, is done. There can be no change now."

And, alas! he who had been so wrong hitherto was too right now. There was no possibility of seeing Mr. Lockfield that night; and again I had to wait. There is a word which implies the chief part of the utmost torment human spirits can endure to those who have practically learned it, and that word is, Wait. There is an end to it, however — a moment when at last one looks back over the intolerable past; and as soon as that

moment came, with the next morning, I ran to Mr. Carey's house. I must see him. He *should* be at home. I could not breathe otherwise. Accordingly, when the door was opened, I asked for him, and pressed to enter at the same moment; but the servant stood in the way, and denied him.

"He's never at home," said I. "I'll wait."

"But he's gone from town for a week," said the servant.

I turned away as much heart-stricken as if it had been a meditated unkindness on his part. He was the person to have set all right again, if any could. But now the blank where I expected speech turned all to desolate night. Wellnigh beaten, I went on towards the gloomier avenues of the Temple, resolved, as a last resource, to apply to Mr. Son; only I was absolutely certain, from recent disappointment, that I should hear again, "Not within." That was the very cause why he was there, and in another minute I was in the presence of the lawyer. He looked very sorry to see me; and as his attention was the one thing I at this moment desired, I tried to conciliate him by the brevity of my statements. I gave him the letter without comment, thinking it needless to point out what part of it it was that offended me; but my surprise was great when I found he fixed his attention, not on the base proposal, but on the terms it offered.

"It's very hard," said he, "certainly, to lose one-half of a sum lawfully due to a man — to a lady, I should say, as I suppose both are involved in one loss; and yet, when we consider 'the law's delay,' 'patient merit,' perhaps the half is better than the hazard."

"Oh," I cried, "I did not think of the thing they offer; it is the base terms."

"The terms!" said Mr. Son. "Ah, yes; I see. And yet . . . . . ."

"So base and dishonourable!" said I, taking the letter out of his hand, and folding it up.

"Nay, nay; don't think that," said he. "They have been considering themselves; and, forgetting that any except strangers like themselves were concerned, they did not reflect, perhaps, that a relation was in the question."

"And if there had been none," I cried, "they would have defamed the dead at their pleasure. But that's not the thing. I beg your pardon. I merely meant to ask you how to proceed, in order to prevent such proposals being accepted."

"What says M. Lockfield?" asked my counsellor.

"I don't know yet. Very likely he thinks well of the proposal."

"Yes, indeed — yes, indeed; in these matters, when the strong man does play such fantastic tricks, it is judicious to give way a little. The law, once set to work by an accuser, is so powerful," said he, "particularly in a case of this kind, where the defendant has to make out his defence against things he is ignorant of."

"But is that a reason, do you think, for letting them passively fix their calumnies on an innocent name?"

"A very bad reason, certainly," said Mr. Son, "but one that has held good since the days of the 'good old rule, the plain and simple plan,' and so on. Now, if you consider their advantages in the command of wealth, and the power possessed by a body, none of whose members is personally answerable for what they do altogether,

you may be disposed to agree that an amicable arrangement is desirable."

"Amicable!"

"I beg your pardon; I really was referring to Mr. Lockfield's probable views. There is half his money, and no law expenses. Now, would it be prudent in you to force him to hazard that sum? — in which case you must guarantee both it and law expenses, supposing us to fail."

"Oh, heaven! I cannot do it; I have not the money," cried I. "But he shall have all. Won't he venture something himself, do you think?"

"Alas!" said Mr. Son, kindly, "that's not what I mean. I would have you withdraw altogether from the hazard. Leave the law and lawyers to themselves, and abide patiently, for your own part, whatever issue they determine on."

"Leave my brother's name to them! I will starve to death first."

"But, after all, is there none but you to defend it?"

"None in the world. They know it."

"Nay, nay; I don't say that," said Mr. Son.

"Thank God, there is still me!" said I. "I am not overcome yet . . . . . But I'll not keep you, sir," I added; for I saw he could do nothing for me. "I hope I have not kept you too long. Good morning to you."

And so I hastily parted from him, feeling as if all were forsaking me, and as if there were nothing left in the world but the care to get and keep money. If an indifferent person viewed it in this light, how must it appear to Mr. Lockfield? He would not hesitate to sacrifice — nay, perhaps had already contemplated the

sacrifice — of an honourable character on the temptation offered him to rescue himself from ruin.

I ran to Mr. Lockfield's chambers, and there he seemed to have expected me, and yet to be sorry I was come; but without saying one thing or the other, he, as usual, waited for me to open the business, and I did not keep him long.

"What do you think of this matter, sir?" said I, fiercely.

"You don't like it, apparently," said Mr. Lockfield.

"*Like it!* What do you mean to *do?* is the question."

He answered me in the coolest voice possible, and in the manner of one annoyed by my interference, "that there was no hurry. Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, all were the same. Let us take time. There was no occasion to be in a hurry."

I was as cold as he directly, and replied, that I myself thought it was better there should be no delay, because there could be but one sole reply.

"There is but one proper reply," said he; "I agree with you in that."

"Well, and what is it?"

"I should particularly wish," said he — "I should particularly wish for some delay on this point."

"For what purpose?" I asked. "Not to make up your own mind; for you agree with me that there is but one course to pursue; and if it is to ask legal opinions, I'll tell you fairly, that I will not listen to *yes* from them, though it were all the lawyers in England!"

"Legal opinions!" cried my companion, contemptuously, and as if the agitation he had been suppressing were glad to escape on any casual subject. "What have legal

opinions to do with the matter? What is the use of consulting anyone? — unless, indeed, it had been for your private satisfaction."

"Mine? No! There is but one course to pursue, and that is, to send a positive refusal. Will you do this, sir?"

"Now, if I might beg you to be in no hurry," said Mr. Lockfield, relapsing into his restrained, cold manner of speaking, with an air of deference which looked like mockery. "It would be so much better not to press on without necessity."

"Nay," said I, "I make no mystery of my resolution. Speak out yours."

"You press me very home," said Mr. Lockfield; "I am driven very home. I should certainly wish for a delay till Wednesday."

"No, to-day is as good as Wednesday, and better, being to-day. There ought not to be an hour's delay."

"So I considered also," said Mr. Lockfield, "when I wrote and sent my letter."

"Wrote! Sent!" I cried, starting.

"Madam!"

"To whom did you write? What did you send? What have you dared do?"

"What can I say, Miss Buckwell? I had formed my resolution. It was the best, under the circumstances. I did certainly wish to spare you any pain, and to act in the manner which best consulted your interests. I thought you could trust me."

"Oh, I could not trust you with a shadow, unless it were money. That fool Wolfe has prevented me from coming to you before. I would have cut off your hand sooner than I would have let you write that word. You

must unwrite it; you must unsay it. I know I cannot repay you; but I would kill you, so that I could make you unwrite that word!"

"It's very strange," said Mr. Lockfield, "that I always displease you. I imagined that I was doing you a service. Now, if you would but consent to wait these few days, and hear their answer, perhaps, after all, you might not think me so wrong."

"What! They will send me money — money bought by Gray's dishonour."

"I hardly think they will send *you* money, as it is to *me* they owe it."

"What is it, then? Promises, I suppose. Oh, what have you done? Let me see what you have done, that I may go to them, and disown it all."

"Very well, ma'am; since you insist upon it, I will. There is my letter, if you really wish to hear it. Here's the copy, at least. 'Gentlemen, I have the honour.....'" he began reading.

"Leave out 'honour;' there's none in this matter."

"Very well, ma'am. 'Gentlemen ..... to acknowledge the receipt.....'"

"Well, well, go on. Come to the point."

"Very well, ma'am. This is it, then. 'You offer me half your debt if I assent to charges against my client; but charges which defame an honourable man are not to be admitted under the pressure of any temptation whatever. I therefore reject your proposal.' That's all."

"Mr. Lockfield," I cried, melted to weeping; and, getting up, I caught hold of his hand, and said, with the few words my voice could command, "God bless you! I'm very much obliged to you!"

He cast down his eyes, and averted his head, that he might not be obliged to take notice of the strong feelings he had excited, and, drawing back his hand, said only, "Dear me, ma'am; of course there was nothing else to be said. You remarked that already."

"Nay, but do hear me thank you," I said.

"Why, ma'am, did you take me for a villain? I did not know it was so wonderful to find me an honest man."

"Well, at least, God bless you, Mr. Lockfield!"

And so I went away, ashamed at what I had said, while what he was doing had been thus high-minded and upright; grateful, mortified, lower than even before; obliged, cast down; most miserable.

But the lowest point was not reached yet. Poor old Rooke, far away from his natural element, the country, with its occupations and its free air and exercise, began to droop, and at last was seized with illness, which was but the outbreak of what had been long preparing. Day by day he had gone to rest earlier, and risen later, saying that now he was weary, and now he had not slept, but it would be right to-morrow; and at last he kept his bed a whole day, but it was only for this time, he said, and in order to get well at once. But, alas! it was the last time. From that day forth, he never "girded himself and went where he would, but another carried him." He was brought to his great chair, there to lie against a pillow, fading away, as old age does, when some fatal stroke has been struck. Still he hoped on, and when the time came once and again at which he had said he should be about again, he put it patiently off a little further, and was still sure another month would see all right.

In the meantime, it was his great comfort and pleasure to talk of Buckwell, and sitting on a low stool by the fire opposite to him, I used to go over and over with him the stories of Gray's strength, and Gray's goodness, in scenes we had left behind. When the twilight came, I still sat there, and tears would begin to force their way when the check of his eye was not upon me. Sometimes I could talk on, and he did not perceive it; sometimes the time to answer came too soon, and then, whether I spoke or was silent, the secret was betrayed, which I tried hard to keep.

"Ah, Miss Katherine," said old Rooke, stretching out his hand, and trying to reach my arm, "don't be too proud to cry; tears will be better wetting your eyes than smothering your heart."

"No, no, Rooke; I'll be braver than that, too. Don't you know that we must bear all things, if we can?"

"Ay, you grand people are over stubborn; but the same tears, I think, are in all our eyes — it's the natural outbreak of the sorrows of us all. What says the Scripture? He does not say, be proud and dry-eyed, but 'Weep, ye afflicted, and mourn,' and the reason is, 'for the misery that is come upon you.'"

"Well, Rooke, well; go on, and talk of Buckwell. Ah! shall we ever see it again, do you think?"

"*You* shall, no doubt; and why not I, too? I took no leave of anything, for I said to myself, it's but a day's journey, and any day we can be back again. It did not seem then like parting for ever."

"Oh, no, I hope not! Things are at the worst, now, Rooke; times are very hard with us. Alas, nobody knows how hard! But there is one harm worst of all, Rooke;

whatever good comes, I shall never, never see Gray any more."

"Ah me, Miss Katherine," said the old man; "now indeed you weep; and where can I fetch you comfort? There's none here, I fear, but the Bible says — 'Thy brother shall rise again.'"

In this way, in the solitary little chamber, alone in the great city, I and the old dependent of my fallen house communed together. His wasting strength, his affection for all that I loved, his long services, and the desolation of my fate, gave him the feeling of friendship, and the privileges of it, which he had not taken in our former situation; but now he was passing away to the land where all are equal, and in this one, though I still loved some, none seemed to love me well, except him, and I clung to the only being left me, more and more affectionately, as I felt I must soon part from him too.

At this time, Rooke was one morning visited by an agent of the inimical companies, who inquired in a more temperate way than had hitherto been employed, into the particulars of his knowledge of his late young master, and compared the information given with that to which he referred in a note-book in his hand, which professed to contain Rooke's examination by Mr. Brutman. He made scarcely any observation, but when he was ready to go away he observed, "And this you'll swear to?" Rooke answered, "Yes, with an oath;" and the examiner, merely uttering a humph, withdrew.

When I informed Mr. Lockfield of this interview, he showed symptoms of great satisfaction, and after indulging himself in "No doubting," and "For his parting," explained that it looked as if they preferred

doing what we at least knew to be justice, to the chance, if they brought the matter to public trial, of finding themselves false accusers.

At last it came to Mr. Lockfield's knowledge, by some means, I do not know what, that at the next board day, as they call it, his claims were to be canvassed anew, and it remained only to await the return of that day to know whether the strong man would think it best for himself to do injustice or justice, to blight or to leave in its unsullied lustre the dearest name in the world.

A great man gone by, Sir Samuel Romilly, has said in his Memoirs, that when he was a boy he had an inward belief that by dreading a calamity he should avert it, and by feeling secure of a blessing, he should lose it. He overcame the feeling when he became a man; but I had it as a child, and retained it when I became a woman; and on this occasion the only reason why I hoped for good in the present case was, that I expected evil. In this foolish, contradictory state, I wore away the days and hours till the day itself arrived, and until the first minutes came and passed at which the decision could be known. When those went by, I gave up the cause at once as lost — or rather, I said to myself that I did so, for the thought would not go away — and although I fancied that I no longer expected any news, yet every sound and every step made me listen.

"At least," thought I, when I could no longer deny that I was still in hopes of something, "at least they will send me the *bad* news." And then I let myself listen again. In fact, a quarter of an hour after, suddenly there came a knock at the door. I looked up for

Mr. Lockfield, with a long lamentable cheerfulness, to say he was entirely ruined, but instead of him it was Mr. Carey. I was disappointed, for I did not think him likely to be the bearer of any intelligence. More likely he was in expectation of hearing some from me, and I wanted at the moment nothing but to hear the bad news at once, and be quiet. However, next to bad news he was the most welcome comer, and I got up to meet him.

"Katherine," said he, cheerily. Now, before he pronounced the next word, though there was but a second's interval, I had thought all this to myself — "He has something to tell; he looks pleased. If I expect good, it will be bad; I will not expect; I will only see he has got a brown coat — a very good brown coat; yes, I see it *is* a brown coat," — and the next thing he said was, "The office pays!"

"Mr. Carey, Mr. Carey!" said I, clasping my hands together, for in that instant it seemed to me that justice was rendered, reparation made.

"It is safe," said he; "they will all do the same — they are all in one cause. I congratulate you, my dear Katherine."

"Oh, thank you. You have felt for us, Mr. Carey — you are as glad for us as though it were for yourself."

"Ah, Katherine, for *us* you say."

"Alas, my own brother!" cried I. "Alas, Gray, my brother! Yet it is *us*, we both are set free, for it is his name, his fame, they attacked."

"Without so much as reflecting they did so," said Mr. Carey.

Mr. Lockfield agreed with Mr. Carey, that it was impossible the offices could unite in resistance, and not unite in concession; they had made common cause to resist us, and could not separate when one of them acknowledged that it had been mistaken in doing so. Accordingly, one board-day after another, there came letters to Mr. Lockfield, saying this office and that had the pleasure to inform him that such a sum and such a sum was ready to be paid to his order. The last sent in its surrender, and he was free of them for ever.

"So shall you be," said Mr. Lockfield to me, "by Wednesday next."

In confidence, then, did I go on forming plans for the future. I began to think of the old house and its green alleys. Mr. Carey in his own prosperity meant to be still happier when he should congratulate me finally. Dr. Monkton said, prosperity was, he thought, a fitter trial for me than adversity. Mr. Lockfield sent my claim on the proper day to the three offices — and was refused.

CHAPTER X.

"But, Mr. Lockfield, how can this be? How is it that some have the power to do injustice, and not the others? Do you think they are serious?"

"Oh, it's no joking matter," said Mr. Lockfield. "They are not gentlemen given to facetiousness."

"Gentlemen, indeed! as if there could be a gentleman among them! They know the truth now, and yet, because of some quibble in their own agreement, they act against it."

"Those among them whom I call gentlemen," said Mr. Lockfield, "don't know the truth."

"Who does, then?"

"Nobody but Brutman."

"Oh, that hateful man! What, is it always John Brutman in the chair?"

"No, no; not at all. There's the chairman, a great man — right honourable, and what not; and the deputy a baronet, I think — but look, here's the list of directors as they are called."

"Why, they *are* gentlemen, after all!" said I in great amaze.

"To be sure; what did you think they were? But I'd bet a guinea they know nothing at all of your affair, except that Brutman tells them they ought not to pay you. It is true they sit weekly for the despatch of business, and so do you daily for the despatch of dinner, yet neither one nor the other need know the materials of which those things are composed."

"Then," cried I, a bright thought striking me, "why not go to them and tell them the truth?"

"What, you?"

"Yes, I."

"And how would you get at them?"

"By knocking at their doors."

"Pshaw! that's just as if it were a business which you had to do with a private person like yourself. This is a company affair, and always managed by lawyers."

"Nevertheless, a company is made up of men, and each man has got ears and a conscience, though he be one of a company. I really think — now don't you

think, Mr. Lockfield — I might do good? I would just tell them the truth."

"And they would just call it the most absurd..... I beg pardon, ma'am, but ladies have the drollest notions of business!"

I could get nothing more from Mr. Lockfield — though he was less savage now than when he was himself in danger — and yet the project, thus suddenly elicited, remained by me, taking better and better colours every time I looked at it; and at last I resolved to go to Dr. Monkton, whose acquaintance was very large, and see if he could give me an introduction to any of them. The project once conceived, I hastened to put it in execution, and remembered, with great pleasure, that my old friend was at this time suffering from one of his frequent attacks of lumbago, which I was quite certain would secure me in finding him at home. Ill though he was, I was sure he would admit me; and, without waiting for refusal or permission, I walked up to his sitting-room, and very gently opening the door, entered without asking if I might. The sight of a fee would probably have thrown him into such a fit of anger, as his servant evidently anticipated from my visit; but he had been long enough sick and alone, to make the unprofitable visit of a friend welcome.

"Ha, Katherine!" said he, turning his eyes, for lumbago made him afraid to move even his head, "it's you, is it? That's right, my dear — sit down, will you."

I complied, and felt that I ought to give a great deal of interest and attention, before I asked any from a man in such a condition. He was sitting, the very picture of pain, in the middle of the room, at a certain

distance from the fire, from the table, and from every sort of employment. He had a great blanket spread behind him, the bell-rope conveyed across the floor to his chair, a handkerchief arranged over his head, and one hand clenched on the arm of the seat, as though prepared for the pangs and twinges that called on his fortitude. "I can't stir," said he; "take a chair, and sit down. I'm glad to see you."

"And I'm sorry to see you so ill — I'm very sorry."

"Oh, don't waste your pity. What can you know about pain or sickness — you who never are ill?"

"That's true; I escape that trouble at least."

"Then you escape what wise men have considered the only evil in life, though you speak of it as if it were not worth reckoning. But to know the value of their own advantages, people ought to lose them, and get them new from time to time. Now if you had been sick all your life, and were well for the first time this year, you would think yourself very happy, notwithstanding your troubles."

"But some people," said I, "are well all their lives, and have no troubles either."

"Then they want to know they are happy — so they are no better off than you. But you are not unhappy?"

"No," said I, sighing.

"Don't sigh," said he, "or else don't say no, for one contradicts the other, and I hate words that don't *mean*. Words are the representatives of things, and it's trifling with a man to offer him a false thing, and show him the cheat at the same time."

In laying down this axiom, he twisted himself in

his chair, and set the anguish of his back into such vigorous activity, that he had need of all his philosophy to endure the evil.

"You'll be better soon," said I, with great compassion, seeing his agony, and not knowing any possible remedy.

"Ah," cried he, "I should hope so. I never was so bad as this before."

"Well, *I* never was so bad either," I cried; "yet that does not make either of us a bit easier."

"I can't answer you now, child," said Dr. Monkton; "but, in short, you are wrong — don't speak though. Take a book, and don't say a word to me, till I'm better."

In fact, his anguish was very great. I stood by in silence, not certainly pressing the point, and only embarrassed how best to show my concern for his physical woe. He was not a man disposed to receive pity, and knowing that, I restrained all expletives and inquiries; and yet I had a conviction that with all his contempt for sympathy, he would not have been gratified if I had entered with perfect interest into the merits of the book he had assigned me. I therefore, to *obey* him, held it in my hand, and to *gratify* him, glanced compassionately towards him, withdrawing my eyes when I perceived that he had seen me do so.

The paroxysm passed by at length, and with a deep sigh he leaned back in his chair and enjoyed the first moments of relief. I looked at him somewhat doubtfully, whether to engage him in conversation or not, but he seemed to have been put in good fellowship by my conduct of the book, and emerged from his solitary sufferings in a sociable mood.

"What have you been doing since I saw you, Katherine? Have you been with Mr. Carey?"

"Yes, and I heard some news. Shall I tell you?"

"Do, my dear."

"Mr. Carey was at Lord —'s last night, that's the man near Buckwell, you know, and heard that his second son is going to marry Miss Tone."

"Is he, indeed!" said Dr. Monkton, who delighted in such gossip. "She is very pretty, poor thing!"

"Why *poor* thing? rich thing, beautiful thing, happy thing, rather."

"Ay, but when I consider that she must be crying and wringing her hands some day, as we all must in our turn, I am sorry for her."

"That's true; but she is no worse off than the rest of us."

"Of course I mean that, when I speak of her. Now, that's so like a woman's answer. The very reason why I'm sorry for her is, that we all *must* do wrong, and *must* be unhappy when once we are born and live."

"Well, the next piece of news is, that I have got a project in my head, and I want you to help me."

"Ah, ha! a little self-interest under all this civility. But what is it?"

"Why, Dr. Monkton, as you said just now, words represent things, and don't you think that when a thing is quite certainly true, there must be some means of saying so?"

"I should think so."

"And these people, these directors — can't they hear reason like common men, though they be directors?"

"What if they can?"

"Why, suppose I went to them and told them all I really know. Some people say they would not undertake a trial if they knew the truth; and that if they could once come into the knowledge of what we used to see and be conscious of, they would certainly do *him* justice."

"My dear, they have the same means of knowing as the other offices."

"Yes, but it seems the constitution of those who have paid makes it rather more difficult for them to do injustice than for these, and that's the reason why those paid, and these don't."

Dr. Monkton pished impatiently; then said, "Katherine, you grow epigrammatic. They none of them want to do injustice."

"To be sure," said I. "Oh, of course; but they do it, without wanting it."

"And you fancy you could enlighten them?"

"As for that, it is quite certain I could, if they would listen and believe me."

"So you would go to them, would you?"

"Yes, I would if I knew them. Now, you know everybody."

"Not I," said Dr. Monkton, laughing; "but suppose I did?"

"Then you would give me an introduction to them. Don't you think it would be a good plan?" said I, meekly.

"Oh, you must answer for yourself — let us hear who they are."

I gave him the paper with the list of names.

"There are names I know here," said he; "names everybody knows. They are men who would not do

wrong to any one individually; but as parts of a company, they lose their personal responsibility. Now, I know this man, the chairman, Mr. Phillips, he is the pleasantest companion you can meet; he is the best-mannered man, most used to society, and as benevolent as he looks. I'll give you a word to him. I know him well as an acquaintance, not as a patient, for he has a body and mind that want no mending — a fine creature. Then the next's a banker, Mr. Godolphin, a harder man, but honourable. If you went out in the world, you'd meet him, as ladies say, 'everywhere;' but he's harder when he sits on his three-legged stool, than in an arm-chair at Lady Anything's, *that* I confess. You must not take your fine medals and coins to him — he'd ring them on the counter to see if they were sterling."

"All right; I'm not going as a heroine, only as a plain dealer."

"The next is David Roberts, a merchant. He told me once he had more rice paper in a ware-house than would supply all England thirty years, according to its present consumption; but he was merely a dinner neighbour one day. Next is Walter Brady, resident director; anybody, I believe, may talk with him merely for the trouble of calling at the office. And Muse — crochetty — he's brigadier-general at Armageddon; he has his commission made out, and I'm sure can't think of concerns of yours. Brutman — everybody who talks with him, remembers him for some hard word he says to them — brutal and powerful — a lawyer, too; but I don't know nor care for him."

"And now, child," said Dr. Monkton, after writing and giving me the notes, "I rather like your plan; it's odd and new, and if it do no other good, it will be an

exercise for your mind; and I shall be glad to watch the result. Always watch your own mental improvement, Katherine."

Such was the view which Dr. Monkton took of my project; and such was the one which I was contented to appear to take; but in my unworded thoughts the result was far different. People who listen to words only, little know what high, ambitious hopes may lurk under the humblest phraseology; how the lips may say, "I shall do no harm," while the heart says, "I shall accomplish it all," especially while one is young, and ignorant how necessary to produce great ends it generally is to proceed by ordinary means.

As soon as I could possibly hope for admission in the morning, I set off to the house of Mr. Phillipps, in whom, from the character given of him by Dr. Monkton, I had chief confidence and hope; and between knocking for admittance, and the answer to my summons, how much anxiety and heart-beating there took place; how I arranged my words, though they had been arranged a hundred times before, and pictured to myself my reception. My face flushed and my bosom throbbed when the servant came, but the last thing I expected was the commonplace answer, Mr. Phillipps is not at home. How should that be, when all my whole projects hung upon seeing him? It was so, however, nor to return till seven o'clock; and instead of the decisive answer, there was nothing for it but twenty-four hours of waiting and wishing. Dr. Monkton had given me a note to him, so leaving this and saying I would call again for the answer, I went away.

"I'll go to the banker next, then," thought I; "can anything take *him* out so early? no, surely; these must

be his business hours, I cannot fail of finding *him*." And hastening on, as near to running as I dared, through the streets, I came in sight of his house, and slackened my pace to get breath, and decent due composure. At that moment the door opened, and a gentleman descending the steps, walked briskly down the street. It was he, I was certain. I darted on, before the door was closed, and fixing my eyes on the quickly retreating figure, held out my letter of introduction to the servant, and thought of one thing only, which was to urge him to run and deliver it before his master should be out of sight.

"There! he's taking the turn to the right — you can see him still. Will you give it him? I *must* see your master. Pray try to catch him!"

The man, staring first at me and then at the note, balanced himself out of the door to look at the figure whom I thus eagerly pointed out; and then withdrawing, answered sulkily, "Master's in the house."

I was ashamed of myself, and not knowing where to find an excuse, asked only to see him, and was admitted into an empty parlour, and the door shut upon me, the disconcerted servant withdrawing with no promising aspect for an early delivery of my message. I could not bear my own impatience; the heavy dining-table, with its bright large claws, the scarlet curtain looped deliberately up, the chairs ranged round the wall — all these objects fixed themselves on my memory just as if they had been the most marking things in the world. I waited long; impatiently, though impatience was powerless. It was nothing to any one but me; but at last I heard a step, and it was over; now the waiting was done, and I fastened my eyes on the door, which at length was opening. Alas! it was the servant again, and

nothing but a note, and the note contained two lines, which were a refusal to see me — Mr. Godolphin could not speak privately on public affairs.

And now I was sure the rest would end ill, and I took my sorrowful way to the other person whom I had to address; certain not to find him, and only entertaining some vague hope that I might, because I felt so sure I should not. It was the office itself to which I directed my steps, the man whom everybody, Dr. Monkton said, might speak to, that I went in search of; and a long way off it was, at least it seemed longer than either of those points to which I had gone with a good hope. The glass door of the office stood ready to be opened. I had but to push it aside, and to present myself to the side room, whence the inhospitable "Come in" of a business-room answered my knock.

"Can I speak to Mr. Brady?" I asked, humbly. One clerk looked at another, and at last a man who was somewhat higher placed than the rest, inquired whether mine was a visit of office business; if so, he could answer it.

"Yes," I said, "office business; but I must see Mr. Brady himself."

"Oh, then ..... no, he's gone out."

I believed him the more readily, because I was already discouraged, and only inquired the hour at which he was to return.

"Return? why three o'clock, or four, perhaps — I cannot tell. But let me know your business."

"No," I said, "it must be Mr. Brady;" and I went out, hopeless now of doing any good to-day, and yet too patient to let it be my own fault; so I resolved to try and waste the time till three o'clock or four, and then

go and be refused admittance again. Nobody observes one in the streets of London; I had learned that; and without interruption I walked on, and stood now and then a few moments looking at the dark folds of the river gushing along, and then at the pressure and the labour, and the thousand steps that wore the pavement. I was so discouraged myself, that I could not find heart to comprehend how they all should take interest in what they were doing. It seemed as though the tide of affairs necessarily rolled on, and dragged men forward, compelling them to be active; but willing as the world was to work, I thought it would surely lie down and die of weariness before the day could close. The only sound with which I sympathised was the melancholy chiming of a clock, which tolled away a few more hours into the great abyss of time.

I let full four o'clock arrive before I returned and then went to ask my fruitless question, "Is Mr. Brady come back?" I knew it would be fruitless, and, accordingly, "No!" was my answer. The day was over then, the day from which I expected so much. I went slowly home through the growing twilight, and there was an end of another "grand mistake."

"But I am going to try again," thought I, when the new courage of a new day came with the morning. "All this has been only unlucky, and I am born to be unlucky. I must try to master my fortune, and force opportunities which won't come of themselves." And with this purpose I looked manfully out on the dank day, thinking to myself that I would not take its gloominess for a bad omen. And because I had rated my fortunes so low, there came a stroke of something better, a something which I had not expected.

At first going out, I always visited Rooke in his sick room. He liked me to do so, and to read a chapter in the Bible before the other cares of the day began.

"If you've time, Miss Katherine," said he, this morning, "please to read me the place in the Bible which ends with 'wipe away tears from all faces.' The first tears dried will be our master's, no doubt, and I often think the pleasure it will be to see your troubles ended first; and afterwards, no doubt, they will remember me."

I did as Rooke asked me, sitting down by him, and leaning the book on the arm of his chair, that he might hear me the better, so that I was turned from the door, and did not see anything except the old man. But before I had finished reading, he lifted his hand to his eyes to shade the light which crossed him from the window, and looking towards the door for an instant, touched my arm to direct my attention there also, and said, "Who's that?" I turned and saw a gentleman standing in the doorway, who was looking at us, and probably was unwilling to interrupt my reading of the Sacred Book.

When he saw himself observed, he came into the room with the same courtesy, neither more nor less, that he and such as he would show in a palace. Old Rooke made an effort to rise, and I got up at once; feeling sure that this was the man who, Dr. Monkton said, was as benevolent as his looks.

"Don't rise," said he, to Rooke, laying his hand for a moment on the old man's arm to prevent him; and to me he made a courteous gesture, seeming to doubt whether I was in the same position of life as Rooke or not. Then, without allowing an awkward pause, he

went on to me: "Your friend, Dr. Monkton, wrote a line yesterday, to desire I would hear you; I am come to *see* you also, and you shall tell me what I can do for you. I sought you first in — Street, but heard you were here." As he said this, he showed that he had his purse in his hand, and that his only idea was, that such was the assistance we required.

"It is you, then?" I asked. "It is really Mr. Phillipps?"

"I am Mr. Phillipps; but that signifies less than that I am ready to render you what assistance is in my power, when I know how. Is the old man your father?"

"Sir," said Rooke, the colour mounting to his face, "why, 'tis Miss Buckwell;" but that name, which was better known than the line of the kings to Rooke, failed to produce any effect. Mr. Phillipps heard it coolly, and merely saying, "Whoever it is, my assistance is ready, if necessary," waited for further explanation.

"But she's Sir Gray's sister," said Rooke; "Sir Gray of Buckwell," he added, raising his voice, and impressing his words on his auditor.

"Oh, I recollect the name now in a matter of public business," answered Mr. Phillipps; "but you must forgive me, madam, if, among a multitude of objects of attention, it was not immediately present to my memory."

"Maybe," said Rooke; "but we've been thinking of nothing but that one matter ever since we came to this brick desert."

"Yet, surely," said Mr. Phillipps, still addressing me, "it cannot be upon that subject that Dr. Monkton has advised you to speak with me. If you are interested in it, I am sorry for you, but I can do nothing. You are blameless, no doubt, but you suffer from the faults of others."

"Sir," cried Rooke, interposing eagerly, "I don't think it becomes you when you are talking gentleman-fashion to my poor young lady to use such untrue sayings. You should not do that till you come to talk legal at the least."

Mr. Phillipps turned to look at him, with something like a smile; but I caught at the last word he himself had said, and answered him.

"That's the very thing which I came to you to deny. It was not to ask anything for myself, but only justice to the friend whom you, I suppose, accuse of doing me a wrong. Why do you say that, sir? What do you know of any wrong he ever did?"

"Nay," said Mr. Phillipps, "why should I grieve you with details which have been officially laid before me?"

"But you yourself, sir, what do *you* know?" I asked.

"I am not, perhaps, called upon to ascertain these matters by my own knowledge," he answered; "otherwise, indeed, I should very properly be subjected to your questions."

"Then I have you," I cried, almost joyfully. "You have only got the report of another, and I will tell you things upon which to judge yourself — you have to decide. You won't refuse to hear?"

"Ay, my good lady," said Mr. Phillipps, "you will tell me, I am sure, what you believe; but do not we all believe good of those whom we love?"

"That I am sure we do," said Rooke. "I never yet thought the man or woman I loved did wrong. That's good."

"And so it will be of your opinion concerning your master?"

"Yes, surely, sir; only *he* never *did* wrong."

"No, you may not call it so; but there may be faults committed against the public, which do not appear in private."

"Ay, but, sir," I cried, "you take that thing for granted, because somebody has told you so. Now, I can do no more than use words to tell you the contrary, and how can I make them true enough? For instance, sir, you say he did but pretend to health, and knew himself meantime to be sick. Sir, I was his sister, and, fearing many things, I never feared he would die. We used to turn death into scorn, because we were not afraid of it. I thought he *might* go away, and of that I never spoke; but I could laugh, and call him sick or feeble, or draw the figures of a monument, because nothing told me death was near."

"You speak strongly of your own persuasions," said Mr. Phillipps, listening to me; "but there may be other reasons why we are unable to grant the justice of his claims."

"*May* be, sir? Do you think then that I have not heard them? Indeed I have; nobody has spared me. I know that you would prove things I can't put into words — and yet, during all the time you say those things went on, I was his companion, his sister, and I thought I was the safest and most honoured sister in the world; proud of him, though there was nothing else on earth of which I had any reason to be proud."

"Nay, go softly," said Mr. Phillipps, taking note, as it were, of all I said, and of nothing I felt. "I shall not so easily understand you when you do not confine yourself to the accusations we actually bring."

"Well, then," said I, as cold as a statue, "you know,

I suppose, everything which your paper of terms requires a man to deny, do not you? All those you are going to prove to be true of him? Now, sir, at least judge if they be true, and do not let anyone do wrong in your name."

"Everything will in due time be laid before us; nothing is done without our perfect knowledge," said Mr. Phillipps, as coldly as I spoke.

"Oh, I have not a doubt of that," I said, hastily, thinking to myself, Oh, what a falsehood you are involuntarily telling! But I preferred conciliating him to showing that I knew he was in the wrong.

"And after all," said Mr. Phillipps, going back upon the track (so to speak), "what is your interest in the affair? You speak solely of your sisterly affection, but is there not also some pecuniary interest?"

"Not some," I said; "all — everything I have in the world, except, perhaps, what may be spent in law to dispute it."

"Nay," answered Mr. Phillipps, "you go before your questioner. You make out your interest in convincing me very strong indeed."

"Do I make you think that I have a view to my own fortune? Oh, I never thought of it in that light. It was my brother who always was my fortune. I seem to rest on him still for it, and, unless you destroy his good name — that is, unless you undo all those years that I remember, make that not to be which once *was*, then my fortune is safe along with him."

Mr. Phillipps, while I spoke, fixed his calm gray eyes steadily on me, as if he were separating the degree of evidence which my assertions contained from my own zeal in making them; and then with kind, but very rigid

minuteness, went on to ask me various particular questions, all of which showed him to be nearly in total ignorance of what his name was authorising. I answered him simply and earnestly, and at last took boldness to ask him whether, if I spoke truth, he was not bound to withdraw his accusations.

"Certainly," said Mr. Phillipps, very gravely.

"Then you will?" I cried, starting up. "It is won; you do him justice."

"Certainly, we wish for nothing else," said he; and it was evident to me, even without more verbal concession on his part, that he had learned much which he never knew before. He bade me to commit to paper what I had told him, that it might be fairly reported to the society, and deliberately thanked me for my information, as if it did him some service. I followed him down stairs, thanking him in my turn, and full of that kindly gratitude which the oppressed feels when the strong man confesses that he has been crushing his victim for want of thinking about it.

Elated with the gleam of success which had shone out on me, I felt bold now to do what I did yesterday with so easily discouraged a spirit. I resolved to make my way even against opposition into the presence of Mr. Godolphin and the other directors, and, writing a note to tell Mr. Godolphin who it was that had already granted me an interview, I took it in my hand, and set out once again to his door. Again I was admitted, and again requested to wait, but not for long this time. In a few minutes the servant returned, with a message that I should follow him to his master's study, and I quickly found myself in the presence of the banker.

He moved about hastily, giving me a chair; bowed

his head forward with a muttered yes, in answer to my unnecessary explanation that I was come, and then sate down himself, fixing his eyes on a letter which he held in his hand, as much as to say, "Talk away, it is quite indifferent to me." Yet I had less difficulty on that account, herhaps, in beginning.

"I'm glad, sir, that you have consented to hear what I have got to say. I was in hopes you would at least do so."

"Oh, yes; Brutman — that's our lawyer — said there was no objection, but I did not choose to be first. However, it will do you no good. I can tell you nothing."

"No, I want you to hear, not tell. I have no doubt you are perfectly acquainted with the case so far as it has been before your office."

"Oh, no, I am not. It never interested me very particularly. I only know, generally, that the actuary stated what seemed to make it satisfactory to resist your claim."

"But won't you judge for yourself whether or not he is mistaken? Only hear me, and judge for yourself."

"You had better not," said Mr. Godolphin, "you are showing your hand."

"Oh, you may see it all, and welcome," I cried, involuntarily spreading my hand; "that is all I wish in the world. If you could know all I know, I should wish for nothing better."

Mr. Godolphin answered only by putting out his head again, with the same sort of indifferent bow; and I began to give him the hardest and coldest statement of facts which I could command.

"Humph!" said Mr. Godolphin; "why did not the actuary know all that, if it is true?"

"But whether he knows it or not, can it be otherwise than true?"

"Why then you can't have any objection to let it stand inquiry in open court," said Mr. Godolphin. "*We* shall have to pay expenses, you know, if you succeed."

"Yes, sir; but in court your advocates have to prove you right, whether you are so or not; whereas, now I am aware you would readily acknowledge it if you are wrong; besides, I have hardly the means of bringing my cause against you, and far more still, I can't bear to think that anyone should try to defame my brother, and pretend even to believe those things of him."

Mr. Godolphin laughed. "I hope," said he, "you will have a more artificial defender in open court than you are for yourself. But, however, don't be frightened; you are doing yourself no harm with me, for, as you say, it is against our own interests to act upon a false view of things. I'm rather glad, in fact, to have learned what you have now mentioned, for the lawyers must not have it too much their own way — it don't do."

"Oh, no; I was sure it was only necessary to get you to hear me. I put my confidence in you. Even against your own private interest, I am quite sure you will act justly."

But Mr. Godolphin was not flattered yet. "It ain't against my private interest," said he, carelessly. "Not one of us should scarcely feel the thing, one way or the other — except the attorneys, and they said it was a proper case to go upon; but, if it is not, it is not, and there will be an end."

"When will there be an end?" I asked, timidly.

"Oh, we'll go into it next board day. If all this is as you say, why of course we pay." So saying, he rose,

and I, following his motion, did the same. "*If* it is true," I thought again — "Is it true the sun is light?"

I went down the steps with a hope that I had been right, Dr. Monkton wrong; he had misjudged these people. Mr. Lockfield was wrong — he had applied his pettifogging maxims too literally to gentlemen; true, they did compose a public body, but still they meant to remember in acting, that they were individually gentlemen.

I went home hoping. I sate down and wrote from my heart all that I had said, and that Mr. Phillipps had desired me to put on paper. It was an excitement; and without thinking of anything else, I wrote on and on, my heart back at Buckwell, and I seeming to myself to be doing again one of the sisterly services which *then* I did every day. It was something which had been strange of late, but which had been once familiar, to be of use, and busy; and the feeling carried me on till I had finished, and the effort was over. But then it came upon me again that my hope was no better than a spectre would have been in former days. I looked round at the lonely little chamber, and its extreme meanness and solitude, and set them side by side with the light, and the affection, and the luxury of the room that had just been present to my mind's eye; there was nothing here, and nothing beyond; nothing in all the world, of which I was a part, that loved or cared for me. I wanted to know why I stayed here; why I must stay wishing to be happy; careful not to suffer injury; providing my food and raiment; taking up a place in the world which I must fain make easy and guard with difficulty; why, I must do all this, since nobody but me cared that all this should be. The night was late, and

the moon shone in through the window; my high window looked far over the streets and places of the vast town. The bright planet above seemed the shore of another land, seen over the great ocean, on one side of which I stood. I could see it with my eyes, but no more; it might hold a new home, it might be the place of my friend, but I could only reach it with eyesight and thought, while my body was held fast on the hither side of the flood. It filled all heaven with light. Our busy to-day, our anxious to-morrow, are all nothing there. I wish we were at rest! Alas! what multitudes, who are not as yet, must come out of their unconsciousness, and pass over the waves of this troublesome world. They have never hoped, nor wept, nor felt, nor loved, nor grieved yet. Other infinite multitudes have done all this, and are at rest. They have traversed the scene, like waters coming into the place where the light shines, and are gone forward again into the darkness; and of that multitude would any one, even the happiest, come back and number over again all the hours they passed here? No; there they lie, and do but implore peace.

I, too, got up next day, again to wish and strive — to add another brick or two to the house of life, which, perhaps, would crumble, after all, in the building. It was the board day, as it was called; and when the time came that they must be deliberating over my letter, I could employ myself in nothing except in picturing the effect it was then producing. When it must be over, I waited every moment for a message. I calculated how long the messenger would be in coming from the one point to the other — what accidents might keep him. Perhaps Mr. Phillipps himself might bring the favourable decision. The time passed; the day began to darken.

Oh, the pain of waiting, of breaking one's heart with expectation! the restlessness for that sound of the messenger's knock at the door! Even if the best thing should come, after that much of suffering, it would come spoiled of its proper pleasure. Vexation and anxiety are a hard and high price to pay for anything. All the day passed, and no message, no answer. "Alas! I have hoped too much," I thought. "It has all gone wrong, no doubt." And again I went to bed, and slept just as long as fatigue and exhaustion took to recruit themselves, and then to wake suddenly, and find my heart beating high, and no chance of falling into kindly forgetfulness again.

But when I was giving up hoping, and the morning was passing away, there came something at least to employ me; for Dr. Monkton entered to pay me a visit. There was a cheeriness about him at which I was cross and angry; for I was sure he was going to say that I had made a useful exercise of my mind, and should be pleased, although I had failed in attaining my object. Accordingly, he began —

"Well, Katherine, you have used a singular proceeding, but it is one upon the idea of which I congratulate you."

"Why?" said I. "I see no great effect, except a long letter, written and read in vain."

"But it is not in vain, if....." said he, stopping, and smiling at me maliciously.

"If it is of use to nobody but me, I am sure it is vain. I only wasted my temper and my time — and my pens, too," I said, snatching up the stump of one, and splitting it to the very end on my nail, all the while looking as goodhumoured as I could, in order to avoid giving Dr. Monkton the pleasure of scolding me.

"Why did you spend any temper upon it? To spend was to waste it, that is certain. I thought it had been written temperately, wisely, as Mr. Phillipps said it was."

"Mr. Phillipps!" cried I, letting fall the pen. "Did he say anything about it?"

"Gently, gently, my girl. If you let your temper break out, first in disappointments, then in hope, in this way, you will lose all command over it. And what advantage, or what disappointment, is there, Katherine, that can compensate that loss?"

"Oh, none, certainly. You see, I am as patient as possible. I am quite calm. So, what did Mr. Phillipps say?"

"Then why does your heart beat in that way?" said Dr. Monkton, looking me full in the face.

"Oh, Dr. Monkton, don't wait till I am good for anything before you treat me mercifully. I am very weak and foolish, and everything I ought not; but I don't pretend to be anything else. Only speak out."

"Well, well; he said, then, that it was a very striking letter, and one which gave him a new view of the case."

"Nay. *Such* good news! Why were you so long telling it?"

"And he insisted upon an investigation; and they gave a commission to that spider, who, I told you, lives in the web."

"Then the spider will hear *me*, won't he? He will hear the truth. I will go to him before he forgets all about it again. Won't he see me, do you think?"

"Yes, very likely," said Dr. Monkton; "and if he should *believe* you too, why the thing is done."

"Oh, good Dr. Monkton, dear Dr. Monkton! that is a good word — a word something like the old words at home. Let me set out, then, before the spider goes from his web; I shall be too late otherwise."

And, accordingly, I took my way to the office again; and when I entered, and asked for Mr. Brady, I was let in this time, and conducted to the very presence which had been inaccessible before. It was an ordinary room, and I found there an ordinary man, smiling and civil, with nothing to identify him with the grievous tragedy which all relating to his proceedings were to me. He heard me with cheerful courtesy, and requested permission to lead me to his own sitting-room, in order that we might enter, he said, more leisurely upon the business which brought me.

I followed him up-stairs, where, quitting the high rails, desks, and bare walls of office, we got into the region of thick carpets; walls hung with excellent pictures, in gorgeous frames; a table of ebony and ivory, brought, he told me, from an old royal palace; and, as it were, a man's whole spendings centred in a space of twenty feet by eighteen. On the splendid old table stood two decanters of wine, and glasses, and a chair with a footstool was drawn near it. Mr. Brady asked me hastily if I would take some refreshment; his niece, he said, had just been refreshing herself; and when I declined on my own account, he hastily put by the decanters in a cupboard out of the way, and took a seat opposite to me.

"Sir," said I, "you know what my business is. I trust you are favourably disposed towards me."

"I cannot speak, ma'am," said he, "indeed I can't speak in the manner I should wish. I am bound to my

body, ma'am, and its interests are paramount even to those of a lady of your merit."

"But you can hear me. Other members of the society have heard me; and, from the character generally reported of you, sir, I do not expect less courtesy than from them."

"Nay, believe me, ma'am," said Mr. Brady, "I have no reserve beyond the necessary caution due to my body."

"And I am sure that caution cannot interfere with the claims of justice, which is all I ask."

"There is no doubt," said Mr. Brady, "that as a general position, every one claims justice as being on their own side. Mind, madam, I say nothing with a particular allusion; I have no reference whatever to immediate circumstances; but I merely advance a position which is found to hold true in the ordinary despatch of business."

"And I am willing to apply it, too," said I. "For my own part, I faithfully believe that what I consider my right, is justice."

"Well, ma'am, even reducing the position to a particular application in this way, I believe we shall not go too far. No, ma'am, I can't think myself bound to conceal — I can't consider myself guilty of indiscretion — if I mention that my body has resolved to do justice."

"What, sir, resolved already?" said I, thinking of the long, anxious past.

"Already?" said Mr. Brady. "Yes, that's well put; it was all in one sitting."

"And what have they resolved?" said I, hastily; for now, indeed, I thought he was going to say, "We are ashamed, and we will do right to your brother."

"Why," said Mr. Brady, rising solemnly, "they resolved to make inquiries."

"Nay; is it possible?" I answered him, after a moment's pause; "so early in the business as that? Well, one's interests are indeed safe in your hands!"

"It is the character of my body," said Mr. Brady, with dignity.

"So I believe, sir. But you must forgive me for being astonished at conduct which, till I had some experience in your honourable ways of doing business, I did not expect."

"Nay, ma'am, you gratify me."

"I mean it, sir," said I, comforting my heart a little by thinking to myself of the

> "'Sense of intolerable wrong,
> And whom I hate, those only strong.'"

"But I will ask," I continued, aloud, "of whom you will now inquire? Here am I to answer questions. Why not begin with me?"

Mr. Brady shook his head. "You have already replied to more than I can ask, in your written statements," said he. "It is impossible to go further, as Mr. Brutman observed, upon the perusal."

"That is to say, if you believe them. And how can you help believing?"

"That, ma'am, is for our inquirer to investigate."

"Let me see him. May I not see him?"

"Truly, if you like the trouble. I must be allowed to let out, that Mr. Brutman asked why you had not applied to him."

"Did he, indeed?" I cried, unable not to betray the pleasure this prospect gave me; for if the lawyer wanted really to know the truth, and would listen to me, then

all indeed was safe. "Did he say so? Oh, I'll go directly!" And, obtaining from Mr. Brady the lawyer's direction, I parted from him with the civillest phrases, and proceeded to Mr. Brutman's abode. I was admitted at once. Mr. Brutman was here habitually on business; and if I would go to his room, a porter said, I should see him in my turn. I mounted, therefore, three pair of stairs, and came to a small round chamber at the top, into which I was ushered. Two clerks were gabbling over a law paper at the table. I passed behind them, and sat down. A step followed me almost as soon as I was there. A man entered — Brutman himself. The clerks stopped gabbling, and went out. He sat down opposite to me; and there I was at the beginning of the final interview.

"I understood," said I, after waiting a moment for him to speak first, if he would — "I understood that you wished to see me."

"*I* wish to see you?" said the lawyer. "No, I don't want to see you."

"I'm very sorry for it, sir," I said, after a moment's pause. "I was in hopes you had something to ask me which would have removed impressions....."

"I have nothing to ask you," said he.

"Won't you hear me, then, at least?"

"Why, what have you more to say than you said in that long letter of yours?"

"Only believe that, and I have done."

"It's nothing at all to the purpose."

"As how?"

"It ain't evidence, you know."

"Indeed I don't know."

"Well, then, I do; and when you have found out

what a court of law is, your lady-like notions will be corrected, perhaps."

"Ay, but it is not a court of law we are come to yet," I said, while I felt the colour burn in my face. "There are some of your society who do not judge in this manner."

"Very good, very good," said Mr. Brutman. "But now, to speak rationally, I should say that if — which is a thing I don't know — but if I were to undertake to persuade the society, instead of *believing* you, to *pay* you a little money?"

"Instead of believing me? What, on condition, perhaps, that I should assent to their assertions."

"Why, what does it signify?"

"Was it that, sir, you had to ask me?"

"No; I said I did not want to ask you anything; but it just strikes me."

"Would to heaven," I thought, "*I* could strike you! I would if I were a man. But, sir," I said aloud, "I grant that you may, perhaps — nay, I can't doubt that you have — received the impressions which you wish me to ratify; but, only suppose for a moment that you *may* have been mistaken, would not you be the first to dissuade me from allowing them?"

"Oh, dear me! that part of the business is past — our minds are made up."

"Not quite, are they, sir? Mr. Phillipps, I believe, says he has received some new impressions."

"If he has received *any*, I'm sure they are new," said my auditor.

"And Mr. Godolphin promised to examine," I said.

"So he did me the favour to tell me," he answered;

"and requested I would enter upon the inquiry, and let him know the result."

"Alas! is it so?" I cried.

"How?" said he. "How is it? They are very honourable gentlemen, and they are all in pursuit of the truth, you know."

"You mock me, sir, though I don't know why. If they really discovered the truth, that is all that would be necessary to make them favourable."

"Oh, ay, so you say — so you suppose, perhaps."

"Sir, you must not speak so. I know my brother."

"You don't," said Mr. Brutman.

There was an end. I was not strong enough to kill him. The expression of contempt and abhorrence would but have given him triumph; and, turning my face, that he might see neither hate, nor sorrow, nor indignation, I spoke no word, and made no sign, but walked silently out of the room.

So it was all over. No hope whatever left; all these days of effort, and of a little hope, thrown away. It was very evident that he governed his society at discretion, and that the conclusion he had resolved upon adopting would be finally theirs, in spite of all reason and truth.

It was so, indeed. They consulted, and examined, as they supposed, another board day, and then sent word that, upon mature deliberation, the favourable impressions produced by my letter had been removed, and they were satisfied of the justice of carrying the case to trial.

CHAPTER XI.

It now, therefore, became necessary to prove those facts which had formed the common everyday experience of life; and the difficulty of establishing them by proof, showed itself in its full force to my more experienced advisers. They exulted much in the advocates who had been delivered over to me as my champions, and who were prepared to take up my cause against that from which they had been released. Mr. Son was the most ostensible; and, from the consultations held with him, was indeed the principal person on my side. But his coadjutor, who, as Mr. Lockfield had said, had been drawn out of the bag as the one who could best be spared, was a lawyer of higher degree, and, from his standing and situation, assumed a more ostensible place in his profession. He could know but little about the case, I thought, as he was thus easily transferred from one side to the other; but, at all events, he was now upon mine, and I was told to be very glad of it.

Things were in this state when, one day, Mr. Lockfield came into my room with an air of cheerful consternation, such as hardly any face but his had the skill to assume, and saluted me with the how-d'ye-do which belong to desperate circumstances, looked on with despairing cheerfulness. Readily expecting some evil intelligence, yet scarcely knowing now what there was to dread, I asked him at once his tidings.

"Speak away, Mr. Lockfield. I am between the worst and the worst now; *one* is behind, and the other before, and I reckon this a calm in which nothing very bad can happen."

"You are the best judge, ma'am," said Lockfield; "but, in my opinion, I could not venture to assert *that* ..... you've heard it, perhaps?"

"Heard what? I have heard nothing — I could not hear less."

"I'm sorry, ma'am, to see you in such high spirits this morning. I would not willingly be the cause of destroying them."

"Oh, God! your only jest-maker!" I answered, with Hamlet; "but don't be angry with me, Mr. Lockfield; I am sure I am grave enough to hear anything bad you can have to tell me."

"I hope it won't pass your expectation, madam. You know your two counsel, ma'am, Mr. Son and Sir John Interest?"

"Well, have they broken their necks?"

"Did you hear they had, ma'am?"

"I hear it? No, nor believe it."

"I did not mean you should, ma'am."

"Well, then, the next best thing they have, is their promise to me — they can't have broken that, because you sealed them with the guineas of faith. So, what is it?"

"*They* have not," said Mr. Lockfield, solemnly.

"They is the plural pronoun," said I; "perhaps it is the singular that is wanted — *he* has — and which?"

"Madam," said Mr. Lockfield, "if you are not serious, *I* am. Sir John Interest, it seems, has found it inconsistent with his dignity to support your cause; he does not feel that he has been properly considered, and he has offered his services to the other party."

"How is that possible, when he has taken up the cause against them?"

"Oh, he returns his retainer; there is no difficulty on his part."

"But his honour was engaged," I said.

"There's the unfortunate point. He felt that it did not do for him, with his name and station, to be given into the bargain with Mr. Son. It did affect his honour; and his high feeling on that point is so correct (I can't but give him credit so far) that he resolved, as it seems, to try whether they could not be tempted by his reputation to give him an astonishing sum for his services, one that should show he was worthy of being taken over to either party that could afford to employ him."

"What's that you are saying? Was it his honour made him do that?"

"Yes, and it is set at such a high price, that I don't think it possible you can make it more to his honour to serve you."

"What, I might buy him back?"

"You could try; but, you know, their wealth is so enormous."

"And if I could buy him back, would I condescend, do you think?"

"Good heavens! ma'am, what can ail you now? Surely I've said nothing to make you angry this time."

"I'm not angry; but to chaffer thus for a champion, when it is a plain, honourable story I have to tell, might make one so."

"Oh, I understand you, ma'am," said Mr. Lockfield, really for once having been perplexed by my want of apprehension. "But you should consider that a plain story is not what is to be told; on the contrary, each

one has a view of his own, which he is bound to prove, let the truth be what it will, and the party that secures the man who will tell it best, has most chance of proving that he himself is in the right."

"And does nobody care, in what he says, whether he tells truth or falsehood?"

"Nay, ma'am, finessing is one of the rules of the game; and, therefore, everybody expecting it from his adversary, practises it himself; it's as good for the ends of justice, and better than if all told truth."

"I don't understand the game, then," said I. "If I see him I'll try another consideration; I'll tax him with what he has done in his character of a gentleman."

"Pardon me, madam; attacked on that ground he would probably say, the transfer of his services had been made without his knowledge — that it was his clerk's doing. There's no use in quarrelling with him."

With diminished forces, therefore, my cause drew near to decision, and at length had reached the very eve of the day of trial — a day which to me, indeed, was everything, but, in the great tide of London, was nothing but three words in the newspaper — Buckwell *versus* Brutman.

It was the day of a grand drawing-room, and the streets were filled with crowds in all their gayest and most important costume. The sun was high and glistening, and the whole object of the crowds and the carriages was to arrive at a certain point by a given time. There was such a multitude wending one way, the streets were all governed so entirely for their convenience; there was such an outlay of money in the whole apparatus; such costly jewels, horses, army-establishment — the swords,

the helmets, the warriors, all in use for the court day — they played at it all so solemnly and expensively, that one felt that those who composed it could not but apprehend they alone in the world were of importance. I had my thoughts as full of myself as they had, but humbly; and I felt, without exactly saying, that those who could afford to *play* at life, were much more entitled to sympathy than those who were working at it.

Nobody could tell, even if they observed me, that I had any greater interest than to come and look at their jewels and feathers. "Ah! there is one would be able to tell," I thought, "if she saw me; and there is Mr. Cary, too" — for at that moment I saw both him and his beautiful wife talking and laughing with a gentleman in the same carriage which the stopping of the line had brought to a pause just before me. I went behind the crowd and watched them. The sparkling diamonds were wrought like foam on the billows of her dark hair; the delicate materials of her dress, the soft, exquisite complexion, the admiration involuntarily expressed in the mode of talking with her of her companions, caught my imagination, and I asked myself, how she must feel to be born that pampered creature, and not poor Katherine Buckwell. *She* wins all, and *I* lose all; she enjoys every day, and I used to enjoy parts of days, and now I suffer all day; I work, I wish, and, if I gain my wish, then I shall feel how hollow it leaves my fate still; but she is beloved, amused, cared for — There, she is gone now; they were thinking of anybody but me; — and at this moment there was a redoubled clamour in the street — some great man or other drove quickly down the line kept for him; the crowd uttered a confuse murmur of

attention not amounting to a shout, but almost more exciting. Then the piercing and triumphant music of the military band broke out; the musical instruments struck against the sun's light, and the gorgeous dresses of the performers shone and glittered. All was splendour and sympathy — the sympathy of a host of brilliant people, who all felt themselves to be necessary parts of a magnificent scene; and I, meantime, succeeded in making my way through them, and at last turned into the silence and shade of the Temple Court.

Here, at the foot of the dirty stairs which I had so often mounted, were assembled a few dusky figures, waiting their turn to see Mr. Lockfield. The court was chiefly in shade, the sun throwing the shadow of one side almost to the end of the pavement, and his bright beams resting only on the space between that and the wall. It was cold and silent. It was another world from that without; but the actors in that glittering, standing, complimenting scene were here suddenly cast behind, as though it was they who here, were without sense and meaning.

Mr. Lockfield had exerted all his skill in tracing the probable story of our adversaries. He had discovered that James Brook, the poacher, was in town. He had made out that the fellows who had been admitted on our last Christmas Eve had been brought up. A servant, dismissed when my Gray adopted the plan of seclusion which was the paradise of my past life, had boasted in alehouses of his importance to a cause where his voice was to win a million of money. Mr. Lockfield had heard that Brutman had discovered persons who were to assert that when we were passing our mornings in lonely walks, and our evenings by that blessed fireside — we

two alone in the world, and projects and pleasures so unlike these woful days occupying us — concealment was adopted to gloss over bodily ailments and habits which would have profaned our holy house. The exact instances which he had invented it was impossible to conjecture; but the object was to meet the whole story, and the person best qualified to testify in a court of law respecting the latter period was Wolfe. They could not receive my evidence, as I was the party interested; but, after me, it was Wolfe who had enjoyed the best opportunities of knowing what was done at every hour; and, accordingly, in all instances in which he had been heard, his testimony had been convincing on the subject.

When I reached Mr. Lockfield's room, therefore, I was not surprised to see Wolfe in full discourse with the persons assembled there; but there was something on every face which perplexed me, and which at once declared a difficulty. Mr. Lockfield was seated at a table, with his "it's-all-over-then" expression full on his face and attitude. He was mending a pen with great nicety and exactness, as though he would make the best of the little things that remained to be cared for in life. Dr. Monkton was talking fast and loud to Wolfe, like a man accustomed to carry his point, and not understanding the probability of failing which he saw before him. Wolfe was exceedingly pale, and trembled visibly; but his eyes were kindled with an expression of resolution such as one sees in a man excited to bear, by the very pain inflicted upon him. He turned when I came into the room, and, seeing me, hid his face a moment in his hands.

"Katherine," said Dr. Monkton, "you are come in time to take a lesson in the meaning of words. This

fine gentleman here has talked about sacrificing his life for his benefactors, has not he.....?"

"And I would," said Wolfe; "only show me how."

"Show you how to cut a piece out of the moon, and fry it for her supper," said Dr. Monkton. "I can say that, too. *I* will do that for you, Katherine, if you will show me how; but walking across the street is another thing."

"Refuse *me* anything, Mr. Wolfe," I said, "but don't do harm to my brother, if that is what is meant."

"Who could do him harm, except the basest of liars?" said Wolfe, with great emotion.

"The man who refuses to speak the truth is no better," said Dr. Monkton.

"I will speak it in the presence of all the world. I would say it on the rack," said Wolfe.

"I am sure you would," I said; "you know the truth, and you can tell it."

"Oh, dear," said Mr. Lockfield, "when ladies and gentlemen choose to speak in fine words! It would be a good thing if everybody knew just the common forms of business — but it does not signify."

"This is no form," said Wolfe; "I have thought on the matter."

"Oh, you have thought, have you?" said Dr. Monkton, bursting into a laugh of the greatest contempt. "Then, certainly, there can be no more said. The world went on well enough in its ignorance, till Jonathan Wolfe began to think. But since that time it is come to light, that you lose your soul when you confirm your word by an oath."

"Nay, Mr. Wolfe," said I, "what does this mean? What shadow of doubt can you have on this busi-

ness? You may swear to these things as to truth of God."

"There, Wolfe, you see how it is," said Dr. Monkton; "the poor girl knows nothing of criticism or metaphysics, and her plain sense at once jumps to the right conclusion; she can see no objection to swearing, except swearing falsely. 'Ye shall not swear by my name falsely,' says the old law; and the new law adds, that we may not swear falsely either by the heaven, or by the earth, or by thy head. Is that so or not?"

"It is *not* so," said Wolfe; "I am obliged to read those plain words, which are yet plainer than sense, and which may not be glossed. I may not put my soul in peril, for it is not mine to hazard."

"I tell you," said Dr. Monkton, very angrily, "that if you make this child lose her little pittance, you go more the way to be damned than through ten thousand oaths!"

"It is so extraordinary," said Mr. Lockfield, "that what constitutes the essence of a court of law should be confounded with the pratices of the church; for a man of common understanding, it really IS....."

"And, sir," said a clerk, softly, seizing a moment when Dr. Monkton had flung away a few indignant steps, and Mr. Lockfield had his head turned quite over his shoulder, looking through the window, "you'll scarcely know you've taken an oath; it's done so slightingly, nobody thinks anything at all of it."

Wolfe looked at me, as much as to say, "Is that an argument to overthrow or confirm my resolution?" But I would not yield him the victory, nor so much as acknowledge that I saw what he meant. I felt how essential to my Gray it was to have this man's testi-

mony. I caught hold of his hand, and spared neither myself nor him, in reminding him of the days which he could redeem from such cruel charges. I brought back to him all his own trouble, all his own relief, all the kind words and ways that had raised him from ignorance and sorrow, to fortune and knowledge. I pressed hard on his gratitude; I spared no prayer; it was all prayer and importunity on my part, not argument, for so that I prevailed, I did not care for being in the right. I thought I should succeed, Dr. Monkton thought so too; he came and stood by silently, only his eyes kindled with a kind enthusiasm which was scarcely ever there. His sympathy animated me, and Wolfe was humbled so low, and touched so deeply, that sobs burst from his bosom, and all his frame expressed his emotion; yet a word was more powerful than all.

"I cannot peril my soul," he repeated. "I read, 'Swear not at all.'"

So there it was all to begin again. Dr. Monkton had proved by a hundred criticisms that the passage bore the sense of *for*swear not thyself; that the context even favoured the taking of an oath when necessary for confirmation, and that the lesson intended was missed by overlooking the context. Wolfe was silenced in argument; but when it came to his opinion, it was as firm the other way as ever. His thoughts had so arranged themselves that they could not be turned into another channel. These two men were unable to catch each other's view; the mind of neither could receive the impression of the other, and Wolfe was as firm as a martyr against argument, persuasion, and prayer.

"The worst of all is, poor dear Katherine," said Dr. Monkton, "that the fellow has told the agent who was

with Rooke and you his determination to take no oath. Brutman heard this, and, therefore, when he himself questioned this Jonathan, he heard his story as if it had been ditch water. He knows, as well as we, that there is no witness except Wolfe, to the events of those days, and this fool is shutting himself out from the witness-box by his refusal. Brutman may fill it with whomsoever he pleases, and Gray is at the mercy of every ruffian that can be bribed."

"And to-morrow is the day of trial!" said Mr. Lockfield. "It is awful to see a solemn event so trifled with!"

"Yes, the lifetime of a human creature is no plaything," said Dr. Monkton. "It's his all; the least, like the greatest, has his all in the fate that befalls his own self. To-morrow must make or mar many a one of you. You, Katherine, poor girl! you first; then you, kind creature, Rooke —"

"And one more," said Wolfe, striking his breast with an agony of passion; "to-morrow I must live or die with the glory of my master!"

"Die, if you will," said Dr. Monkton; "better far out of the way than cumbering the earth with such a thankless burthen."

"Yes, yes, much better die, if I may," said Wolfe; and starting off from his place, he darted from the room; but I know not how it was, we scarcely attended to his flight, and made no effort to stop him.

But Dr. Monkton was excited rather than depressed by opposition; he was eager for the success of an event in which he took so deep an interest, but he became even now more eager that his project should not be defeated by Jonathan Wolfe. He took upon himself its

protection, and as other means seemed to fail, grew even more confident in his own power of bringing to a favourable issue the event upon which he had founded much of his own future contentment.

"They are preparing their train to avoid my evidence, doubtless," said he; "but I have kept all to myself, and they little think how I shall baffle them." And thus exulting, he went on canvassing with Mr. Lockfield the measures taken; and late did it grow in the night while I listened; amazed, wearied, and dizzy with uncertainty.

When I returned home, Mrs. Wolfe was preparing already to retire for the night. She had sate up merely to gossip with me over the prospect of the trial; she was as much elated by it as if it had been a wedding, or a funeral, or anything else which was fitted to make her either laugh or cry. I had not the heart to tell her much about it; but I sate down on the opposite side of the fire to her, the shadow of the mantel-shelf hiding my face while I ate a meal which she had left on the table. Mrs. Wolfe was but a bad companion; she had nothing to ask that I liked to answer, and nothing to answer but what she had said a thousand times before; "of course everything would go as I wished it, there could not be any doubt but that it was all doing well; she only wished she was as sure of a hundred pounds, as she was that I should win the cause. It was quite a folly to vex myself with thinking otherwise." I knew very well that she could at the same moment have turned to another person, and said, "Poor dear Miss Katherine, she'll never get her suit," and turned up her eyes, and spread out her hands, and shaken her head, in utter disbelief of any good befalling me. But she called it keeping up my spirits to hold forth these weak falsities,

and her consolation so vexed and irritated me, that I soon ceased eating, and saying I was tired, went away to my own room. But it was impossible to rest; the hard usage of the world went too near my heart, and if I closed my eyes it seemed as though I were falling asleep in the presence of some watchful enemy who was about to spring upon me. I knew this was folly, and yet I could not shake off the impression. Instead, therefore, of seeking any longer to rest, I lighted the candle again, which I had put out; and to regain, if possible, a little of the peace which had once belonged to me, I went to look for the few precious memorials of old days during which I had a friend to love. I had a little bundle of Gray's letters remaining after all that had been thought useful by Mr. Lockfield had been taken away. These I had long abstained from looking at, but to-night it did not seem that the present pain could be increased, and I was fain to read them, while home feelings had not yet been profaned. They were old letters, from the time when we were children up to that which came during the last separation. There were the first projects, the fond idle names and terms which we had invented and understood; the adventure achieved, the commission given, the day of return fixed — they were the living words of a present time, as though written even now; they were the words of glee, and play, which had fallen now away from the idea of him who had passed into such a solemn scene. I began reading with thoughts full of anger and fear at all the world, but I could not go over all those happy and virtuous scenes, and hate or fear anything. I took refuge with Gray. I remembered the pure and happy feelings of those days, and I kneeled down at last, and then,

indeed, weeping, and forlorn though I was, a bright ray of peace came out over the darkest hour that ever I began to spend.

While the unthought of pleasure of these mixed feelings raised me so unexpectedly above trouble, my attention, which was unwilling enough to be distracted, was, however, forcibly caught by what seemed to me to be a groan. It struck me at once that Wolfe had committed some rash act on himself, and I ran to his room. There was a dim, confused sound within, partly of a human voice in low murmurs, and partly of I knew not what movement, or action, the uncertain nature of which terrified me. I stood still, undetermined what to do, till again the voice of pain made itself heard, and then I thrust open the door. The sight within was strange, though less dreadful than I had feared. Wolfe was there before me, habited not as I usually saw him, but in a black uniform dress of some coarse stuff, which more resembled that of a convent than anything else. He was kneeling in the midst of the floor; there was nothing to support him, and I saw with horror and fear that under his bare, naked knees was some sharp instrument, laid edgeways on the floor, which had cut through the skin, and all along which lay a great line of blood, gradually spreading on each side, as it oozed from his wounded limbs. His face was as pale as that of a fainting man, but his uplifted eyes and excited features wore an expression of wild enthusiasm, which at times was overcome by pain, and yet the pain reacted in kindling anew the enthusiasm. He was murmuring some low sound of words when I came in, but on my entrance he stopped, and without as yet quitting his painful attitude lowered his eyes to my face, and seemed

bewildered for a few moments, and unable to regain his consciousness of ordinary objects.

It was as frightful as a phantom, and I rushed to him, and caught hold of his arm, to make him speak and move, and convince myself it was no spectre I looked upon.

"Mr. Wolfe," I cried, "I beseech you, speak to me! What is this? get up, I entreat you. You are dying! Speak to me;" but he had already resumed, in part, at least, his own self-control. He rose with difficulty, and his pale face was covered with a deep blush, which yielded again to exhaustion.

"Why do you come here?" he said, tottering against a table for support. "This is no sight for you. These things are sacred — they have never yet been revealed."

"And, for God's sake, tell me what they mean!" I cried, trembling far more than the suffering man, beside whom I stood, and whose eyes were fixed upon the the instrument, and the evidence of the torture he had just been enduring.

"You cannot understand them, I fear," said Wolfe; "and yet in my own heart I feel that they contain a mystery which even now elevates me among those who walk not by faith but by sight. I am not what I was when I kneeled down six hours ago on yonder bed of pain."

"Six hours! May the God who comforted me but now, forbid you should suffer so fearfully!"

"Nay, it is His command," said Wolfe. "I was a guilty and a feeble mortal in your presence so long ago as that. This heart of flesh was warped, and I could not distinguish its human dictates from the voice which I had so often heard there. But the penance of these

long hours has torn the veil away; I have purified myself, and I am able now to catch, though but for a moment perhaps, the sight of yonder not obscure heaven. Now, do what I will, I shall do right — I have obtained a guide."

"And what is it you are about to do, Wolfe?" I said, frightened more and more by his excitement. "Can you take a calm resolution, do you think, in this passion of your feelings? Can you decide reasonably while you are laying aside your reason?"

"Oh, Father!" said Wolfe, clasping his hands, and lifting his eyes, "this is no season of excitement. My heart is low and humble like that of the least child. I have laid all passion to rest; I hardly know that this heart beats; my bare reason alone is awake, and lifted up in purity to Thee. I can almost hear now those voices, and see those scenes which earthly passion obscures and blinds. I am ready for the law, in its unclouded truth."

"Alas! were you not better prepared when your mind and body were calm? What is it you mean?"

"No, Miss Buckwell; when I quitted you, I know not what was in my heart. To me it seemed as though I were some fiend of ingratitude, upon whom my dead benefactor was charging his pain. Even now I must not say that again. It brings all back which I have striven against. I might, perhaps, have yielded to those worldly men; I might have been prevailed on by you to give up my conscience; but I had a sure refuge — a tried remedy. Look round; it is not the first time....." and, as he spoke, he directed my attention to the room, which indeed bore the appearance of the cell of an ascetic, and was filled with evidences of days and nights of self-infliction.

"Look," said Wolfe; "I have learned here to abide the sharp pains of hunger, and the mortification of the flesh; and here I fled to take counsel, when I found how weak I proved in the presence of human supplication and argument. Now I am strong; you said I was proud, but I have conquered my pride; I am humble, I have no opinion; I do not say that the thing you require of me is either right or wrong; I renounce my judgment; my own heart said I was ungrateful, but I am not ungrateful now; it has ceased to throb at the name of my benefactor; it has cast all its concerns into the one absorbing love of God. I am calm now; if I may do this thing for you, I shall go and do it willingly. I fear you will thank me, but if this good mood last, I shall not even be glad of your thanks. If I may not do it, I shall be willing not to do it; for I shall but act as an instrument, and I shall bear your reproaches patiently. Now I am God's servant. I have fasted and suffered pain for this, and I know He will reveal to me His will. Look, there is the Book of Truth. I will open it at hazard, and it will tell me whether I shall do this thing for you or not."

Wolfe advanced a step, and stretched out his hand to open the Bible. I sprang forward to prevent him, for I foresaw how it would be; but he pushed me aside, and, taking it in both hands, shook open the pages — it unclosed at the passage he had so studied, "Swear not at all." Wolfe read it as though it had been an oracle; he laid down the book with no change of countenance, only turning his eyes upon me, to announce a determination which admitted no appeal. I made none; he was a fool in my eyes, doing wrong and calling it religion. I despised as much as I pitied him.

CHAPTER XII.

When the day began to clear, I put my dress in order, and waited for the hour at which Mr. Carey had promised to call for me. We were to be joined at Guildhall by Dr. Monkton, who had minutely fixed the moment of meeting. We set off, and Mr. Carey, as we went, tried to encourage me, but I felt that his own views of the case were gloomy. Mine were not so this morning; the nearer it came, the more impossible it seemed to me that when a true thing came to be proved, it could be proved falsely. I felt, that in my own heart all along, even under every fear and evil prognostic, I had not practically believed that the event could be other than one; and, with this blind persuasion, I did not like to hear at this time any consolation that seemed to take it for granted I must be prepared for the worst.

"So, Katherine," said Mr. Carey, when we had set off, and were proceeding at a rapid pace towards our destination, "it is come at last; and the day looks kindly upon you, does not it? Lift up that pale face of yours, my dear Katherine, and see if it is not a goodly sky and a bright sun, come what will down here."

"Yes, yes," I said; "there's an equally good light to see truth by, I hope, in the judge's court, whether the day be fine or not."

"I hope so too; and, at all events, beyond it; and after this day is gone and forgotten, I hope there is many a pleasant hour independently of it, for you, Katherine."

"No, not independently. I don't *care* either, if there is. I don't want to think of anything that is indepen-

dent of this; all may go if I must not believe this day will be safe."

"Nay, nay; you don't speak as you think. You have yourself such a just view of the difficulties of to-day, that I know you must be prepared for either event."

"Certainly; besides, you know, it is quite impossible to suppose that in the end there can be any result but one. I see all the difficulty, as you say — oh, yes, I am quite prepared, and therefore I shall exult the more, you know, in the result."

"Well, my dear Katherine, I see in what way you are prepared; but, as your friend....."

"No, no, not now; I have got a good heart, as fortune-tellers say, since morning; last night I was dismal enough; but there is something here that seems to say, things will go well. As you observed just now, the day is bright, and you came in exact time, and we are going so swiftly, and without any hindrance. I almost feel merry, and it is months since I felt that before."

Mr. Carey answered nothing, but I was not discouraged. Our pace abated when we got into the crowded part of the city, but we proceeded without serious interruption, and in good time reached the narrow way which, turning out of Cheapside shows at the end the formal front of Guildhall, and the court, round the three sides of which the various halls are built. There were numerous vehicles of one description or another waiting or setting down their passengers at the steps, and we had to pause a little while during the time the last was occupied in so doing. It was a moment of excitement; there were many persons collected as lookers-on; the mere crowd made one too proud to bow the head or let the eye fill, and the impulse reacted on the spirit. But,

looking up, I saw a thing which gave me a nobler feeling — high up, quite out of view, unless one's eyes went off the dusky court and the trodden pavement, were some words on the wall — "Domine, dirige nos," were the words.

"Mr. Carey," I said, laying hold of his arm, "I have got Latin enough for that, and I do say it with all my heart; then, whichever party is in the right will come out of this place triumphant."

"If you are defeated, what will you say?"

"First, I should like to ask whether the enemy also said the prayer, and *meant* it. But never mind, come on."

"I don't know much of these matters," said Mr. Carey; "I shall make but a bad guide for you, Katherine."

"Oh, a very good one; but if we want any instruction, we shall get it from Dr. Monkton, for he has made a study of it."

"Ay, where is he? Can you see him any where?"

"No, not yet. This way, is not it?"

And accordingly a little door was opened to our left, which immediately emitted the sound and smell of a room well filled with human inhabitants, but which presented none of that imposing appearance which I had attached to a court of justice. We emerged, indeed, merely into a passage formed by the wall on our right, and on our left by the side of a raised enclosure, which was mounted by a few steps, and which placed those who occupied it at a little height above us. Through the narrow way everyone was passing and repassing who wanted to reach the top or bottom of the room; and, while we were making our way upwards with some dif-

ficulty, Mr. Lockfield suddenly descended upon us from the platform above, and, as if he had been watching and waiting with something so say, broke out at once —

"You've heard it? Good heavens! can anything be done?"

"Heard what? No bad news, I trust," said Mr. Carey, looking at me; and then I knew at once I had been a fool to feel lighthearted for an instant.

"What bad news?" I asked. "What can there be yet?"

"Can be? *Is?*" cried Mr. Lockfield, very crossly. "Enough to justify me in what I say, I should think. Is *this* enough? Dr. Monkton is very ill, and cannot appear in court."

"Our main dependance!" said Mr. Carey.

"Oh, he must come — he must!" said I.

"If that's your final determination," said Mr. Lockfield, "you have to postpone the trial till he is recovered, and then the expense of keeping all these witnesses in London falls upon you. Am I to announce that?"

"God forgive you, Mr. Lockfield, for trifling with me at such a moment! How can I tell what is my determination? Mr. Carey, think for me."

"Indeed, I will, Katherine, my very best — but here is one will do much better for you;" he pointed, as he said so, to the open door, across which we saw hastening through the outer room Mr. Son, arrayed in his professional robes, which he bore like a player who is out of his part, and who, in his natural character, merely wears the dress because it is inconvenient to be always taking it off and putting it on. His black robe hung loosely about him, flying back from his arms as he walked quickly forward; his wig stuck closely, but was

out of keeping with his boots, his coat, and his hurried step. He glanced neither to the right nor to the left; but Mr. Lockfield hastening up to him to secure the moment of speaking to him, he at once, as a thing of course, cast himself down on a bench which ran along the side of a table in the room, and fell into the attitude of one who is to say a word with the client's attorney before going into court. Mr. Carey and I joined the consultation.

"Can't possibly come," were Mr. Lockfield's words, when we reached them.

"Won't come! yes, I see, exactly," said Mr. Son, rather angrily. "What he has to say would injure the cause, and he does not choose to come; but really you should have told me this before."

"Sir, he was quite well yesterday," I cried; "it must be a sudden attack which he is sometimes subject to."

"Oh, you need not be under any scruple in speaking to me," said Mr. Son; "only it's sadly late in the day, and I do complain that I was not made acquainted with the real state of things before, Mr. Lockfield."

"Upon my word, sir, if the Doctor knows anything which he is afraid of saying, it is *my* first intimation," answered Mr. Lockfield, casting a vexed look at me.

"Are you supposing," cried Mr. Carey, "that Dr. Monkton has anything to conceal, and that it is that which detains him? Sir, believe me . . . . . ."

"Nay, pray, sir," said Mr. Son, in a pacifying voice, "I merely say that I ought to have known it. I have been preparing myself under the belief that no concealment was necessary; but a lady always, unfortunately, will make the best of her case, even to her lawyer."

Mr. Carey and I looked at each other in blank

astonishment; Mr. Son looked simply perplexed; Mr. Lockfield, black and angry. At last, breaking the pause, I went close up to Mr. Son, and asked him if it were possible that at this hour he, too, was forsaking me; whether he could indeed believe I had deceived him, or whether it was an excuse by which he meant merely to give himself a means of leaving an unpopular cause. He looked quite astonished.

"I have no such intention, believe me," said he. "Of course I am bound to you to recover your money, if possible. I am only sorry that I should do it with the disadvantage of a certain degree of ignorance as to the nature of the case. However, it is better late than never, and I am glad it did not come upon me actually in court."

"Then you think, sir," said Mr. Lockfield, interrupting me, "that it is better to go forward to-day?"

"Oh, I think so, sir; an unwilling witness always finds means to avoid coming forward, or, at all events, is, in my opinion, dangerous."

"But he is . . . . . oh, believe me this *once* . . . . . he *is* SO willing a witness!"

"Exactly, yes. Well, then, only to put it on another ground — can you stand the expense — £ 500 a day, at a low rate?"

"Quite impossible," I said, dejectedly.

"Ay, well, we'll leave it on that ground. So we go on, do we, Mr. Lockfield?"

"If you please, sir."

"Then we had best go into court," said Mr. Son, rising; "and, my dear madam," he said, turning to me, "pray forgive me if I used any expression displeasing to you. It *is*, perhaps, a weakness of your sex, but a most amiable one, I am sure."

"He is gone, and thinks I have deceived him!" I cried, wringing my hands.

"Well, that don't make the least difference," said Mr. Lockfield. "Will you come back into court?"

The court was a long, and, in proportion, rather narrow building; at one end was the raised chair of the judge, to which he had access from a room behind. Below him was an official acting for him in various ways; and ranged before, on benches, with desks in front, were two rows of lawyers, in the first of which was Mr. Son, and, beside him, Sir John Interest, the leaders of the opposite causes. Mr. Carey and I got places in a line with the judge, under some white letters, spelling "Students," and behind a set of men prepared to make short-hand notes of the trial — they were newspaper reporters, I believe, and privileged to occupy these places, through all the weal and woe that went on daily under that roof.

On the right of the judge was a sort of large pew, against the side of the wall, where sat a party of men, upon counting whom it was easy to conclude they were those twelve arbiters who must decide upon our fate.

The mere preliminaries were going on as yet. There was some whispering and consultation among the lawyers on our side, which proved to be the public acting of the resolution to go on with the trial, which had been privately taken before, notwithstanding the absence of Dr. Monkton. It gave occasion to inform the judge that an important witness had just sent a certificate of his inability to attend; and in consequence it remained to determine whether the plaintiff would proceed or wait his recovery.

"I thought," said Mr. Carey, softly, to Mr. Lockfield

who stood by us, "that your counsel had decided that in the other room."

"Yes, to be sure," answered Mr. Lockfield; "but he does this to persuade the jury of the truth of the illness; it looks more real, to pretend to doubt whether or not we shall wait for him. See how thoughtful he seems; there, he shakes his head as if he were unable to make up his mind; now he pretends to have just decided; hear him."

And accordingly Mr. Son proceeded to inform the judge that, however unfortunate was the absence of so important a witness, it had been determined, on this unexpected emergency, to go on without him. The judge merely dilated his nostrils by a short grunt, and the official below proceeded to swear the jury. This was another preliminary, and the first repetition of the forms had nearly brought me to tears, because it was the first step in that day's business, upon which every wish of my life depended.

"You shall well and truly try the issue, and give a verdict, &c., so help you God!" But that which sounded full of meaning at first, struck upon my ear as a mechanical chant, after the third or fourth time, and I came to know so well the very intonation with which the form of words was to be read, that my ear became nervous, and the muscles of my mouth were on the very point of giving way to as loud and ringing laughter, as ever in former days had been set going by the motion of the dancing spirits or the light heart. To anybody accustomed to the business of the court, it was a mere form, and to less excited spectators, it was no otherwise interesting than as it made them acquainted with the several names of the jury. It was soon over; the clerk

of the court sat down, and all being now ready, the chief actor, Mr. Son, arose. He gave his own cause a good light by remarking in the outset of his speech, against what a host of antagonists he had singly to defend his client. "Three of the great leaders of the law," said he, "who had been chosen for their talents to fill offices of the state, stood against him. The powerful body who could afford to command such talents, had arrayed them against a poor and lonely individual, whose interests he was proud to defend, though he defended them alone, believing on his soul they were the truth." He looked deeply in earnest, but then I knew it was playing at being in earnest; for did not he himself at this moment believe that one of the truest things that could be true — Dr. Monkton's knowledge of my Gray — was not true, and yet it made no difference in his manner of treating the subject. He did not get so far as my heart then, when I heard him state his case; and yet he did it very well. Among other subjects touched upon, was "the feeling that must, beyond doubt, occupy the heart of the sister, who, under any other circumstances, would have been the most prominent witness, but who, her own interests being concerned, had not the privilege of appearing in favour of a being whom affection, even more than nature, had given her awhile for the defence and ornament of an unfavoured existence." Every one who knew whereabout I was, turned to look at me, and others asked, and I was pointed out. Mr. Lockfield turned full upon me, and his large, prominent eyes were overflowed by tears; but I had not a single tear to shed, and if it would have moved that assembly to see me hide my face and weep, as I had done so many an hour before, they were unmoved, for I was like a stone.

Mr. Son's opening address was short, his full burst of eloquence being reserved for the time when he should comment upon all the facts adduced in evidence, and he soon proceeded to call his witnesses. Mr. Carey was the first — the early and late friend and companion of Gray, the depository of his plans, the frequent inmate of his house — he had nothing but good to say, and said it in the best manner; his frank, straightforward, and hearty testimony was as perfect as possible. I looked steadfastly at the jury, and could see some making notes, and some nodding approbation. It was the first current, and it ran for success. But when he was going, and Mr. Son and his assistants had asked all, Sir John Interest stopped him and desired to cross-examine him. I did not know before how much doubt and expectation could be thrown into the mind by suggestions, to be developed by and by, as it seemed, when the full time should come. Mr. Carey had given an account of such and such years; his querist inquired — "Where were you, sir, just the year before?"

"Abroad," said Mr. Carey.

"That particular year you did not see the late Sir Gray?"

Mr. Carey answered, "No," and Sir John replied by an emphatic "Humph!" while he gave time to the judge to make a note of the question and answer, and by the silence let the jury and whole court observe that he did so. Once more, when this was over, he prayed again to know who was the confidential physician of the family; and when Mr. Carey denied that any one could have that title, obscurely, and with the art of one who throws a coil, brought him by degrees to the name of Dr. Monkton, whom, if Mr. Carey would not acknow-

ledge as habitually employed, because nobody was, yet at all events was the only one who could be named, and who to-day *we* knew could not appear. What harm did all this do? None, apparently; the facts in themselves were most innocent, yet every one present felt that they must keep them in mind, for some great consequences which were to follow.

Mr. Tasebrook had joined us soon after the beginning of the trial, and he formed sagacious conclusions concerning the object in view of the enemy's counsel. The difficulty attending their side of the question, and the schemes which he perceived to be laid for obtaining an issue favourable to the false view of it, excited his interest in a manner natural to one who had formerly played such games himself; and although he somewhat wished that I should succeed, yet the talent with which the adversary undermined my cause, created in him an admiration which he neither concealed nor limited.

"What a counsel you've lost, Miss Katherine!" said he, fixing his eyes on this man in profound admiration. "What a judicious line of attack he has chosen; he evidently knew how strong you were on general grounds — it must be said there can't be stronger grounds — therefore he makes his stand on particular circumstances, against which, if true, general character says nothing. Somebody or other will swear to such a story, and such another — not true, of course, but that's no business of his, he has only to prove it to the jury. I dare say he has a dozen at his fingers' ends, and he is as cool as spring rain, laying his train to bring them out one after the other. Well, Miss Katherine, I would have impatiently penetrated him with prayer, sooner than have let him go, if I had been you."

"What is it he is doing now?" said Mr. Carey, stopping Mr. Tasebrook. "What's that paper?"

It was my uncle who was under examination at this moment. Like an old man, he had been moved to tears more than once, and his affectionate and simple manner gave an interest to his testimony, which was evidently felt. The impression was great; it was only quite at last that one question was respectfully put to him by the adversary.

"Be so good, sir, as to say whether this is the handwriting of your nephew?"

The very simplicity of this question startled not me only, but every one. Why should the adversary be interested in verifying his handwriting?

Everybody longed to hear the witness say no, because the adversary had asked this question with a tone implying he wished to hear yes. There was a pause, during which my uncle painfully examined the paper in question.

"It is his name," said he, at last, looking up.

"And his handwriting?" asked the questioner.

"Why — I see how it is; you have made a mistake, sir, and your mistake gives you a false impression — the writing is like his, if he were ill or his hand shook, and somebody has imposed it for his; but it's a mistake — it is a copy, I think, sir, and a bad one — his writing was straight and delicate, I assure you it was."

"Is not this his?" asked Sir John Interest.

"No, sir; believe me, no."

Mr. Carey drew a breath like one relieved; but Mr. Tasebrook, with eager eyes, watching the counsel's face, said, "That's the very answer he wished — he has it. Something is to be made of that denial — he wanted it denied. Now, what is it? But listen again."

And accordingly, Sir John was proposing one more question to my uncle with great suavity and courtesy — "Was Sir Gray ill at the date of this paper?"

"No, no, my uncle," I said, softly, yet louder I suppose, than I thought, for Mr. Lockfield pushed my arm, and Mr. Carey more kindly laid his hand upon it. Mr. Tasebrook winked with one eye, as if he saw farther than I did, but recovered his gravity decently, and watched what to him was but a play.

"Ill?" said my uncle, alarmed by the sudden demand on his memory. "How can I say whether he was or not; I should think not, but I am upon oath, sir. I would not mislead you, I am sure."

"Was he, Miss Katherine?" asked Mr. Tasebrook, eagerly, and watching the progress which things would take between the counsel and the witness.

"Oh, no, no! he could not be; he never was ill but once."

"Oh," said Mr. Tasebrook; "well now, what will Interest make of it?"

"Nobody suspects you of misleading us, sir," said Sir John Interest to my uncle; "take time, sir, and you will recollect whether there occurred any illness to your nephew at this period."

"It is June 14th, I see," said my uncle, taking the paper again into his hand. "Now, a man may have a headache, and all his friends not know of it."

"He may have a headache," said Interest. "Yes; but it goes even closer, you see, sir," he continued, "the date is so very particular — June 14th, nine in the morning."

"I dare not take upon me....." my uncle began, but I did not hear the rest of his answer, for I knew now what the paper was. "Oh, Mr. Carey, Mr. Carey, don't you know it? it is the very paper he wrote when we

found the bank note for Wolfe at Dr. Monkton's. Did not you hear of it? oh, my Gray and I ran home so quickly to write it. My hand shook so I could not, *he* did it, but his shook too. What evil is come upon him for that?"

"What, Miss Katherine," said Mr. Tasebrook, thrusting his head close, "is that the paper, do you think?"

"Oh, I'm quite sure."

"By George!" said Mr. Tasebrook, "then I see it — don't you, sir?"

"No, indeed," said Mr. Carey. "What an enemy wants with proving a good action, I don't know."

"Pshaw! *don't* you know that's just the period of his life they've fixed upon to lay to his charge intemperate habits. It *is* a card for them — here's his own uncle denying the identity of his writing, saying it shakes so, it can't be his, though it seems by Miss Katherine, that there's no doubt about it. The paper is dated in the morning, when a drunken man's hand will shake, and they are hammering away at my father-in-law, to make him prove that illness was not the cause — so they have it their own way. Hark! he's saying, 'To the best of my knowledge, he was perfectly well.' Old fox, that Interest."

"But, Katherine," said Mr. Carey, stooping down, "was no one present who can testify for you against the conclusion they draw?"

"Only Wolfe. Oh, how they have laid their plot!"

"Wolfe *shall* appear," cried Mr. Carey; and he turned eagerly to Mr. Lockfield to tell him what he had made out, and to consult him on the possibility of bringing a refutation. Mr. Lockfield sighed, laid his head on one side. However, the end of their conference was, that he and Mr. Carey together went hastily out of court,

unobserved except by ourselves, and the examination of the witnesses proceeded.

The next summoned was old Rooke, and there was a little pause after his name had been pronounced before he could be placed before the assembly, for it was necessary to carry him in a chair up the court, when he was called for, and there was a slight difficulty in getting the chair into the witness-box. A few of the spectators seemed interested in his appearance; there were some who stood up to look at him, and there seemed a feeling of concern and sympathy among them; but the persons who were habituated to such scenes had no time to spare for this touch of sentiment. Mr. Son, indeed, whose witness he was, put his countenance and attitude into keeping with it, but the rest, both friends and antagonists, seemed to see no necessity for such by-play, and the judge looked cross and impatient at having the business of the court delayed by the infirmities of the old man.

The clerk, meantime, had been watching him as they sat down, merely with a view to bring him the Bible, and get the oath over as fast as possible; and as soon as he was placed, the official climbed up one step to reach over the rail, and to thrust the Book to his lips, while he himself muttered over the words, "You shall well and truly," &c. But poor Rooke had a more serious thought at his heart. He was going to tell the whole truth about his beloved master, and he meant everybody to know that it was indeed the truth. Before answering, therefore he laid his thin and bony hands on each arm of the seat wherein they had carried him, and leaning his weight upon them, rose slowly and tremblingly; he stood upright by a great effort, his thin white hair un-

covered, and his eyes lighted up, and carrying the Book to his lips, kissed it with the same earnestness with which he came to hell his story, and pronounced aloud, "So help me, God." Many a one in the assembly felt that the action was simple and beautiful; but many also are habitually moved by what is unusual to mere stupid laughter, and the suppressed momentary sound of derision made itself heard. Poor Rooke had been used all his life to hear holy things respected by his superiors, and when he meant to please them best, he knew he must show most decent regard for those things, and it was unaccountable to him that the assembly into whose presence he was brought, should make him feel that he deserved ridicule. I saw the blood mount into his white cheeks, as he looked round, and then his eyes sank like one unexpectedly cowed and humiliated; but again the reason why he was here rose in his heart, and turning back on himself, as it were, he murmured in a low voice, as if he spoke to himself, "And I *do* mean to tell the truth."

Mr. Son began his examination, and contrived very skilfully, as I thought, to make those circumstances available which belonged to the most picturesque part of the old dependent's relation to his master. He drew from him also the incidents which painted most naturally the habits of an active and healthy young man, and in all his examinations he was completely successful. Rooke told his tale without any garrulity and pride, such as used to animate him by his fireside, or sitting on a sunny bank in an autumn day — all that was gone with his place, and his old habits, and with Buckwell. He sat before his audience with a drooping head, raising his eyes meekly on all who spoke to him, and his hands

crossed on his knee, the trembling of which was visible sometimes when the question agitated him more than usual.

The impression made by his simple truths was great; it seemed impossible that the man, whose course of life was thus tracked from year to year, could be stained with any error great enough to warrant the public attack upon his memory; and when Sir John Interest came to his cross-examination, still the old man was clear, and had nothing but the same story to tell. The skilful lawyer felt this, and seemed to be on the point of dismissing the witness altogether, but Mr. Tasebrook knew him better.

"He's not done yet," said he, "I see there's more behind — it's like standing on a mine. When all seems safe, all is about to burst under your feet."

And, indeed, just when they were preparing to take Rooke from the box, Sir John Interest made a sign, and turning over his papers, presented one mildly to the old man.

"That's it," whispered Mr. Tasebrook; "it's the very same, Miss Katherine, that he showed your uncle. Will you just look?"

"I see something else," said I; "I see Mr. Carey, and he has brought Wolfe with him. Oh, thank God! thank God! there is Wolfe coming into the court."

"No, you don't say so," cried Mr. Tasebrook, almost rubbing his hands. "I beg pardon, Miss Katherine, but really I am quite interested. What a stroke that will be."

"And you think it is none of his, then," said Interest; "*not* his writing?"

"No, I tell you it's fit for no such a gentleman."

"But is not it a bit like his then," said Interest; "for instance, now — after dinner?"

"Ay, like a tipsy man's, you mean," said Rooke; "but not his."

Interest took back the paper without a word, but he glanced round with a sneer of triumph, which Rooke saw, but could not understand. I observed Mr. Carey speaking to Wolfe, who was as pale as death, and listened to him with that fixed air which hid such a world of passion. Mr. Lockfield was scribbling a note to the counsel. There was a little pause, during which old Rooke was removed, and that gave time for Mr. Son to receive the hasty billet. He was evidently excited by the news conveyed. There was a short whispering among the lawyers — a pause, and then the clerk pronounced aloud the name of Jonathan Wolfe, and he was seen mounting the steps of the witness-box. Oh, joy! yes, it was joy to think the bare truth should be spoken!

"Interest absolutely started," said Mr. Tasebrook, touching my arm to make me attend to him, but not withdrawing his eyes from the scene; "your counsel is delighted. Listen, look!" just as if such an injunction was necessary.

"Swear him," said Sir John to the clerk, as if merely hastening his movements, but the tone was one which I felt appealed to every religious terror that had ever haunted the heart of young Wolfe — the keen eyes too were fastened full upon him. Wolfe bore the appeal like a rock. He stood there pale, excited, and resolute; as complete a contrast to the withered and feeble frame and face, which was being borne slowly away from the same place, as it was possible for the eyes of the spectators to look upon.

"Swear him," said Sir John Interest.

"Yes, swear the witness," said Mr. Son, as much in a matter-of-course tone as possible, and standing up ready to question him as soon as the ceremony should be gone through.

The clerk approached, and running through the form

as usual, presented the Book to Janathan, who taking it from him, held it in his hand a moment, standing quite upright, and by his silence and his attitude commanding attention, and winning the perfect silence of the spectators. He looked slowly round him as he observed this, then laying the book reverently on one side, he leaned both hands on the front of the rails within which he was standing, and collecting his voice pronounced aloud — "I dare not swear!" then, as the hum of voices instantly rose round him, he raised his own still higher than the ensuing tumult, and speaking very loudly, went on — "But I testify; *that* man was unimpeachable in mind, in health, in....."

It was impossible to hear him further; he perceived it himself, and stopped entirely, closing his lips and looking round on the eager figures who interfered. Sir John Interest's stentorian voice appealing to the judge against irregularity; the judge interfering with angry zeal at the contempt of his authority; the official clerk standing up and eagerly seconding him — when Wolfe yielded, the tumult lulled and sank along with his opposition, so that it again became possible to distinguish speech; and Sir John Interest was availing himself of it to demand loudly the exclusion of the intruder, when Wolfe watching patiently, and marking nothing but his own purpose, seized the right moment, and raising his voice to the loudest tone, went on — "his hand trembled from *haste* alone when that paper....."

But again he could not be heard; he was saying, not swearing. Sir John had a right to silence him. The jury had no right to listen to him. The judge was incensed; there was a strong feeling through all the court, of the contempt with which it was treated. The officer

of the court laid hands on Wolfe, and forcibly drew him down from the box. It was as if he had been talking in a dream, for the language of the place had no meaning without an oath, and words which were things elsewhere, here were empty air.

"Won't they believe him, Mr. Tasebrook?" I said; "they must, they can't help having heard, though it *is* irregular."

"If they do," said Mr. Tasebrook, "the judge will forbid them to heed; but I think they know their business too well....."

Wolfe passed close by me at this moment. "What is truth, then?" said he, the excitement of the past moment still trembling in his frame.

"If gentlemen *could* be contented without scenes!" said Mr. Lockfield.

"Interest takes snuff," said Mr. Tasebrook; "he's happy."

It was only those who were aware of the hidden history of the transaction, and who knew in what way the opposite party was working out their own story, to whom the case wore the appearance which it began to put on to us. Other people observed the high general character, the affection with which friends spoke, the habitual reverence of dependents; they sympathized with all this, and could not understand, as yet, the dark spots which were being manufactured, to stain what was, in itself, so bright and pure.

Mr. Son, no doubt, felt all the difficulties to come; but at present his cause bore the appearance of triumph, and he had enough excitement for its progress to carry him on heartily to the speech wherewith he was to close his case. He examined his last witness, and sat cooling and preparing himself while his junior counsel conducted some subordinate examination; and, finally,

when the scene had thus been made ready for his exertions — the arena, as it were, cleared — he rose in his place and addressed his audience. Nothing could sound better — the honourable life, honoured till it closed, the golden opinions, the household love, the reputation such as the noblest there might be glad to die with; yet all this vilified, disgraced, polluted after death. All, all this, he said; and he was saying what *we* could not so much be said to believe as to know; his words were truths, and yet on the audience they did not make the impression of truth — they were an actor's words, and he was acting belief: for if he, an acute lawyer, believed all he said, no one could disbelieve it; but the very essential of the place was, that another acute lawyer should prove an opposite story, which, if, on his part, he believed, the reason of other people must believe also. Truth became a trial of wits, and those who absolutely knew what was the truth, felt that the *reality* of things was the smallest circumstance in favour of proving them.

When he had finished there came half an hour's interval, during which all the persons engaged in the scene left the court to refresh themselves; and there was many a sub-official to whom this, and no other, was *the* half hour of the day. This was the season for having ready the judge's mutton chop, and for the coffee-room table to be in activity; the waiters ran about the passages; and daily, between the pain, and grief, and fear, and hope, of two parties, came the interest, and the hurry that the chop should be ready and not burned, and the ham and porter devoured and paid for. The plaintiff and defendant, I suppose, are seldom in that party; but all the rest of the assembly are members of it, of course.

When these hungry wants were satisfied, came the scene again. The judge, with his wig, resumed his place; the lawyers came to their benches in front of him. Sir John was prepared to tell the truth out of all that had gone before; and, when things were ready, he got up, and his act of the tragedy began. But I did not stay to hear him. I only listened to the first two or three sentences, and then I went out into the long and nearly empty room which is common to the several courts round it, and where I might sit down at the table which ran through the middle of the apartment, and wait, unremarked, the course which injustice was running. There was no effort to make; no exertion would avail; there was nothing to do but to tarry till five or six hours had gone over the clock, and, at the end of that time, the event would come — the event which was already certain, be it what it might. The only uncertainty was the present knowledge of it.

With this dogged thought, I wrapped my cloak about me and laid my head on the table; but nature was not so quiescent, and even the very words I used, to prove to myself the necessity of patience, wrung the tears from my eyes till they wet my hands, which I had laid under them on the table, and till my throat, at times, was convulsed by a deep sob. I sate, however, motionless, refusing myself pity even, as all else seemed to refuse it. The quarters of the hour tolled themselves on their way from the clock without. Three of them, or more, might be gone by, when at last the silence of the room was broken by hastier steps than those of the persons who had hitherto moved about it occasionally, and who were officials of the court merely wasting a little of their waiting time; and then I heard Mr. Carey's voice,

and Mr. Tasebrook's, asking for me. I got up, pulling my bonnet over my eyes, and went to meet them, sure there would be no good news, and only shrinking like a coward from the fresh stroke of pain.

"Oh, Miss Katherine!" cried the latter, "you should not go out of court. It's shocking, but exceedingly clever. Do you know....."

"My poor, dear child," said Mr. Carey, "it is as we feared. Dr. Monkton's absence ruins us."

"It is the most extraordinary proof of the power of the law," said Mr. Tasebrook. "Facts to be unfacted thus."

"They will believe it, then?"

"They can't help themselves, I think," said Mr. Tasebrook; "perdition hangs on conviction."

"Indeed it is possible they may, Katherine," said Mr. Carey; "but they must not. Go to Dr. Monkton, implore him to come — don't be in haste, go gently — succeed by some means."

"Do bring him, dear Miss Katherine," said Mr. Tasebrook; "your side can get permission to examine him after their cause is finished. It will keep the jury in such a perplexity; but it's *you*, indeed, I am concerned for. On your account it is that, though sick, I hope the Doctor will be moved by the clamorous solicitation of a friend."

Before Mr. Tasebrook had finished I was ready to go; the appeal had roused me from the fatalist feelings which had fallen over me. Mr. Carey's words had put my feelings in the right train; I spoke to *him* only, for I hated Mr. Tasebrook at that moment too much to address him. I told him I *would* succeed; and, leaving him to continue here and watch what was doing, I found my way into the outer court of the large building, alone, and ran through the crowded streets towards Dr. Monkton's house.

CHAPTER XIII.

It seemed to me that, in going away from the scene where all this anxiety was carried on, I was neglecting something that might tend to bring it to a good issue; that in the time I must necessarily be away, the event would take place, which yet, when I was near and watching, must, I felt, and knew, occupy many hours. I was restless to get back to the place where I had just been sitting inactive, though I could do nothing there. I was afraid of looking at, and attending to, the objects of a far different nature which surrounded me, and which seemed to hide the one I was concerned in, only to let it take some unexpected and terrible shape while it was unobserved. My speed, therefore, to Dr. Monkton's house was as great as it was possible to make it; and, so soon as the servant unclosed the door, I pressed forward to his presence. It was in vain to tell me he was very ill; I gave the excuse no heed, and followed close up stairs. All here was luxury and ease; personal comfort, personal safety, filled the house. Whatever a man could command for his own pleasure was here. But the master of all this lay in pain, which nothing outer could relieve; he, himself, was suffering the penalties which it was vain for wealth and self love to contend against; and, what was more, his face bore such an expression of uneasiness and disquiet, that it almost seemed as if my fortunes were taking their revenge by levelling the prosperous man and the lover of himself, with me.

I expected nothing but harshness in his reception of me, and had no wish in my heart so near and so dear as to conciliate him at whatever cost, not caring for any aggression against me, if such should be the price that

he asked for granting my request. I cared for nothing but obtaining it, and I went to him and kneeled down at the side of his chair, as I had often done before when he was sick and in pain, and when I was willing to render him any service, or show any kindness which could be acceptable. But now it was for want of words in which to make my request that I was silent; I so desired to say the right thing that I was afraid to speak, and all I did was to look in his face, to find whether or not this was the moment wherein to make my petition. But, when he saw me, he himself began the dialogue at once, and in a tone unlike anything I expected.

"Child, Katherine, is it you? Have *you* thought of me, then, on such a day? Is not this a strange sight, Katherine, that the man who to-day could do some good for once in his life, is this very day sported at by the Ruler of things, and made the prey of a twisted nerve, an acid juice? Is this a wise government?"

"Oh, to-day you could do *such* good," I said, laying my hands both together on his arm, yet withdrawing them for the fear of hurting him.

"Put down your hands, Katherine," said Dr. Monkton; "you won't hurt me, poor thing! it is I am hurting you. I am glad you are come at last. These fools here know nothing, and care for nothing — how should they, indeed? Tell me, child, how things are going."

"They are proving lies about Gray, and you are not there to contradict them."

"And what keeps me?" cried he, clenching his hand; "sickness, such as an old woman might have, or a puling child — did not I say that I would govern this day as it ought to be governed, and as *I could* govern it? My mind has been all day in the presence of men,

but *I*, I lie here folded in flannel, and good for nothing but to take physic twice in an hour."

"But you are better now, are you not? there is time still."

"Better? no, worse a great deal. I have been expecting to be better, and I ought, for I could be of use. I thought I should be, till an hour ago, and then I was forced to own that, compared with the morning, I was three parts dead. I am worse, a great deal, I tell you."

"I did not mean to make you angry, dear Dr. Monkton; only....."

"Make me angry? Oh, Katherine! I am miserable, not angry. Child, child, come close to me. I have been thinking to do something for you to-day — I have intended to restore the name of your old house. What use will it be to me to go back into the world if I find my own pride there all crumbled? Katherine, I've done no wrong that I know of — I have done rightly, I know, in making myself what I am, instead of the poor hard-used boy I was when I began life; and yet what has fate done for me? has not it turned my bread to stones? have not I had gold instead of food given me? When I loved something it died — one died whom you never knew of, and no one else that's alive now; and your father died who was my friend. Then I loved his son better than all before, and the kick of a brute animal took away the spirit of man, and the still more brute passion of money comes to blot out the light of his good name; and all this while, through all these changes, I grow rich; that is all the change that happens to *me*. I am richer, let who will die, who will suffer!"

"But something better than that can happen now," I said, surprised at the opening of his generally closely-concealed thoughts; "you can save that name still."

"I could this morning," said he; "a thousand pounds could have put off this accursed trial, until I could have appeared. Did not they ask you, poor Katherine, if *you* could do it?"

"Poor Katherine, indeed," I said, "for I could not, I have spent all, and all in vain."

"And I spared my money," said he: "I have saved it, but I don't know how I can spend it, so as to cover over the pain of saving it. I wish I were a poor man and wanted food. Take away your down coverlet," said he, dashing aside the light and soft folds of one which had been wrapped round him.

"Oh, then, do it yet," I cried, availing myself of the feeling which was working so strongly in him; "it will cost you pain, no doubt, but for Gray's sake bear it, our own friend. They say if you can come to the court, you can disprove all their calumnies. Yet try, oh, try!"

"I come? Who said so? Did they believe I could, and that I would not; or did they and you take so little account of my life that you would have me die so that I served you? Well, that's but the portion of an old man without friends. A child, or a brother, or an old friend, if I had had one, would have thought for me."

"But it is *my* brother that I am thinking of," I said; "it is my dead brother, who has only his sister now to love him, and I do love him better still than I love you; and, if I can prevail, that love will make me put you to pain, ay, and in danger too, to do him good."

Dr. Monkton looked at me, and tears started into his eyes. "You speak out, my brave girl," said he, "you speak truth; when I am dead, who will say any such word for me? I *will* come, Katherine, though I should die for it," and as he said so, he lifted himself with in-

finite difficulty from his chair. The pain was evidently intense, but I placed my arm for him to lean upon, watching only whether it were possible he should bear it. He did bear it bravely, almost ostentatiously, for another step, and another, and then his face grew perfectly white on a sudden, and he fell heavily on the floor.

"You've killed him, ma'am," said the nurse, running in and lifting him as well as she could upon a chair; "no, I don't think he's dead, neither;" and she proceeded to search for remedies, which I eagerly assisted her in administering. He remained long insensible, and while he lay there helpless and humble before me, I could not but think of all the times of prosperity and enjoyment in which I had been accustomed to look up to him as a superior in every way, and it seemed like a revenge on my part to look on now, when he was brought to this low estate. I felt that I had been overselfish in urging him so vehemently to exertion. It was Gray's friend — it was our old indweller of Buckwell whom I had thus treated — his harshest word never went to my heart like his white face and pale open lips. I watched with the greatest eagerness for the first sign of life, but it was long coming. Consciousness, however, came as soon as the vital powers stirred again, and he recognised me, and the scene around him, the moment he recovered.

"It *is* impossible, Katherine," said he, in a feeble voice; "I am thrown by — I may do nothing."

"No, no; do but get well again. I have been wrong to ask you. Gray would not have done so."

"Ah, he would have done nothing wrong; he was a creature made in the best mould of body and mind, and I would have said so before all the world if I could, but

I can do nothing. I am of no consequence, otherwise I should not be used thus to-day. No; the old man must die in a corner — die on a heap of gold, if he will — lingering because his gold will buy drugs. Oh, Katherine! was it not far better for *him* to die as he did, in all the pride and independence of life, leaving behind something to grieve for him as *you* grieve? Oh, I wish any one creature would think of me, as you think of him!"

"But he was so kind to me," I said; "there never was a day but what he said, or thought, or wrote, some kindness. I did not do him good as he did me, but he loved me as well as if I did."

"And that is not what I have done," said Dr. Monkton. "I have been harsh to you, sometimes, have not I, Katherine? Yes, it is very true that my nature was not golden like his; mine was earthy — but I could not help that, I was made so, and I'm punished for that. I can do nothing for you, I, who meant to-day to have saved you."

"But you can love him still, though you may not go and justify him — you and I shall talk of him. There cannot be any change in the things gone by, though they are making up their own wild stories about them. No, rest and get well, dear Dr. Monkton; don't think more of us — we were orphans always, and it is only I who have to suffer, for he is safe."

"Only you?" said Dr. Monkton; "why, what am I doing? am not I suffering?"

"Not like me; but I will bear patiently."

"Patience!" cried Dr. Monkton; "women are always patient. It is part of their nature. But it's very right in you, my dear, and I don't mean to say anything cross to you, only the want of it in me cannot be wondered

at. But never mind that now, Katherine. Ah, yes! You are going, are you?"

And so, without success, but caring less for it than when I arrived, I quitted Dr. Monkton's house, and once more made my way through the full streets towards the court of justice. The day was going down, and the courts and halls were more gloomy than when I left them; otherwise there was no change, though a couple of hours nearly had passed; and when the door of the court unclosed, and I went just within its walls, the very same voice, the same attitude, the same gloomy face and figure of the judge opposite, struck my eyes, as had been there since half-past nine of the bright morning. It was to me like some huge machine that had been at work all day, and was bringing about its result — the weary day having dragged through now nearly to a close.

I stayed only till Mr. Carey had observed me, and then went out of hearing of the contest, and sate down on a bench outside the lower end of the court. The first voice I heard was Mr. Tasebrook's.

"Won't he come, Miss Katherine? can't you bring him?" said he; "it is wonderful the effect he would produce."

"Don't make me think so, for he cannot, and I begin to wish all were over at once — ill over I know it must be."

"You are tired, Katherine, you look exhausted," said Mr. Carey; "but don't despair yet; when you have eaten something and rested, you will think better of things."

"Here's the waiter will fetch a glass of wine in a minute," said a blue-coated man with a staff; "the plaintiff and defendant, especially if they be a lady, most commonly take a glass of sherry about a third of the cause."

"I think a glass of fire would be just as acceptable," said I, for the very idea of wine to a burning mouth, such as mine was at the moment, was terrible. "I don't feel tired, but there is no use in caring about the result — no doubt it is already certain."

"By no means," said Mr. Carey. "Some things they overprove and some they can't prove at all, but certainly they make their case very strong."

"Yes, but they feel their own weakness, I can tell you," said Mr. Tasebrook; "their isolated facts are hard hit by your comprehensive ones. What is best on their side, and worst for you, Miss Katherine, is, that the judge thinks Dr. Monkton's absence very suspicious; his son was with him at his luncheon, and he said to me just now that the judge judges for himself about such a sudden attack."

"And yet there's the truth within a mile of them," I said. "I saw him try to stir just now and he fainted on the spot: yet if that fact is tried here, they will prove him out hunting, for all I can tell."

"Very good, Miss Katherine," said Mr. Tasebrook, laughing in a cheery way, which took me quite by surprise; "you've a clear idea now of the power of the law. Now, that Christmas night, which I've heard you talk of it, is a pretty bit of squirearchical romance, yet the fellows who shared it have been in and produced an uncommon effect by their account of the wine on the table at twelve at night. And the shot that hit your bonnet, Miss Katherine, and Sir Gray's saying you would have made a heavy game-bag; and then refusing all interest in the county, and nobody scarcely seeing him."

"Why should you listen to all these things, Katherine?" said Mr. Carey; "they can only give you pain."

"Ay, to be sure, I did not think of that," said Mr. Tasebrook; "very proper feelings, and so on, I am sure. Well, well, it will all go right yet, you know, Miss Katherine..."

"Nay, I know no such thing."

"Oh, dear, it *ought*, I'm sure. A young man *I* had always such respect for, and everybody too. When I look at Buckwell, I often say to myself, or to anybody that happens to be near, 'The catastrophes of fortunes bring blushes to fiction.'" Mr. Tasebrook raised one of his great sighs as he spoke, and was putting on a countenance proper for the occasion, when, through the open door of the court, we heard the name of James Brook called upon as a witness.

"The poacher," cried Mr. Tasebrook, throwing aside his half-assumed air; "that's the man whose donkey was shot — they pretend nobody in his senses could do it. Fancy proving *that* of a man of his kind of intellect. I won't lose a word. Will you come, Mr. Carey?" he added, turning half round as he was going.

Mr. Carey did not listen to him, but took his place beside me, when he was gone, and sate down, offering me no other comfort except the near presence of a friend, thinking, I knew, of what *I* was thinking, and though as little able to give relief as one who should witness the throes of bodily pain, yet helping to bear it as such a one might do by the charm of the human hand expressing kindness.

The time passed on and we could do nothing but wait the event. Now and then an indifferent person passing said a word of what was going on within the court. An inferior officer of the court standing and waiting about, yawned his weariness to another, and expressed his belief that the witnesses were nearly all

examined, and his hope that the speeches and summing up would not keep him from supper.

At last there were signs of a change; there was a bustle and a movement, and the first person who issued was Mr. Tasebrook, in haste, to say that his opinion of the thing was, that he had never heard a more sharp encounter than that just concluded between the counsel.

"I declare I think yours had the best of it, Miss Katherine," said he; "though the other, you see, had a great hold in poor old Monkton's sickness and in his own witnesses, fellows that really stood at nothing — never saw such witnesses! But certainly Son was very great when he came to put in the fine words and the affecting part. Said he, in one passage, standing up with his chest out, and his eyes on fire, full fixed on the other lawyer — 'Now, if these charges be *not* true, said he, 'wit of man cannot devise the punishment which ought to follow upon the attempt to prove them.'"

"And what did Sir John do?" asked Mr. Carey; "those were hard words."

"Oh, Sir John? He just cast his eye out of the corner, as much as to say, 'That's well said, I'm sure.'"

"Ah, he would not show any emotion, I suppose," said Mr. Carey.

"Emotion, oh! he was writing a letter part of the time. They are all used to hard words. Why, the next good thing which Son said was in allusion to the phrase *Esprit de corps*, which Interest had applied to the testimony of the many loving friends of Sir Gray. This, Son laid hold of, and, with his face all wrought up to indignation, spoke out, rolling up the sentence to the end, 'There is one plea brought forward by them of which the company and their advocate ought to be

ashamed — I say, ought to be ashamed' — yet Interest looked straight forward, just as an actor does when another is declaiming. Emotion, indeed!"

"He ought to have felt it, then," said Mr. Carey.

"Here they are," said Mr. Tasebrook, interrupting him as he spoke; and, in fact, the door of the court opened again, and two dusky figures issued together, whom we presently recognised to be the two principal champions, and of whom, Mr. Son's burning face and moist brow bore witness that he had but that moment ceased from energetic exertion. Sir John Interest and he walked slowly round the hall, in order, probably, that they might grow cool before going into the outer air; and it seemed as though they had taken the moment to confer on some point in which they both were greatly concerned.

"Yet it is all over, now," said Mr. Carey, observing them; "there can be nothing further to discuss, I suppose."

They were so intent upon their own conversation that they did not observe us; and, as they passed, Mr. Son said —

"There's no doubt Jenkins will be acquitted if you can prepossess the jury that train oil is of the nature of spermaceti."

Sir John's answer we did not distinguish, but Mr. Tasebrook shot his tongue out of his mouth in exquisite enjoyment of Mr. Carey's surprise; and, before they came to our place again, the two champions took a short turn across the hall and went out of the great door. Not very long after, all the play — for, indeed, it merely was one to the audience at large — was over. The judge had finished his charge and came sweeping by in

his robes, his attendants clearing the way, and he hastening to his carriage, and to dinner. All the spectators moved off when he was gone. The excitement of the scene was over to them, but the solemn business, the event, remained behind. The jury had retired to work out, as it were, the business-like part. It must come now, and soon, too; soon it seemed, even though the day had been so much too long.

But the *soon* was but comparative, for the deliberations of the jury lingered hour after hour, even till midnight approached. The great clock struck twelve at last.

"The day is over," I said, "and yet it is not decided. Last night at twelve o'clock I said to myself, By this time to-morrow I shall be glad or miserable, but all remains as it was."

"There's a footstep now," said Mr. Carey; "some one running — what is it?"

"It is over now," cried Mr. Tasebrook, hastening past us.

"Sir," said an official, speaking to Mr. Carey, "the jury is coming out, they'll be in the court before you, if you don't run."

"You'd better not come in, Katherine," said Mr. Carey, though at first he had laid hold of my arm; but he looked in my face and advised me to stay away.

"I think so," I said, sitting down again, for I felt like a person in a shipwreck, who is ready in his mind to die, yet when the vessel settles to sink, he does not know how to face the actual dying moment. I gained a few more minutes before I knew all, by staying here, and though the suspense seemed to be sucking life away, I could not endure the sharp pang which must end

it. The suspense of the long day left me helpless before the coming blow. I had suffered to excess, yet there was the fear still of the actual word announcing the worst.

Thus wrought up, I sat looking at the door, and no doubt it was full ten minutes that this state lasted. Let anybody count one minute, and think of *that;* nor smile, that when with a harsh, loud noise, the door opened, and figures came out, figures which I knew brought the news, for there was Mr. Carey, and Mr. Tasebrook, and Mr. Lockfield, I put both hands to my ears, and sank my head, with closed eyes, to prevent myself from hearing and seeing. I felt a hand pulling mine, and after a moment opened my eyes and looked up, but would not uncover my ears. I examined their faces quickly, glancing over first one, then the other, and saw Mr. Carey's eyes overflowing with tears, Mr. Tasebrook smiling, or rather making mouths, it seemed to me, and then I was sure.

"I'll have neither pity nor exhortation," thought I suddenly; and up I sprang, drew myself to the highest stature I possessed, looked them boldly in the face, and cried — "Speak out!"

"You've won the cause!" "They pay, with £5,000 damages!" "Gray is justified!" said Mr. Lockfield, Mr. Tasebrook, Mr. Carey, severally, but speaking at the same time.

"Thank God!" I said, "my brother — my brother! thank God!"

THE END.

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Clive, Caroline

Year after year a tale

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